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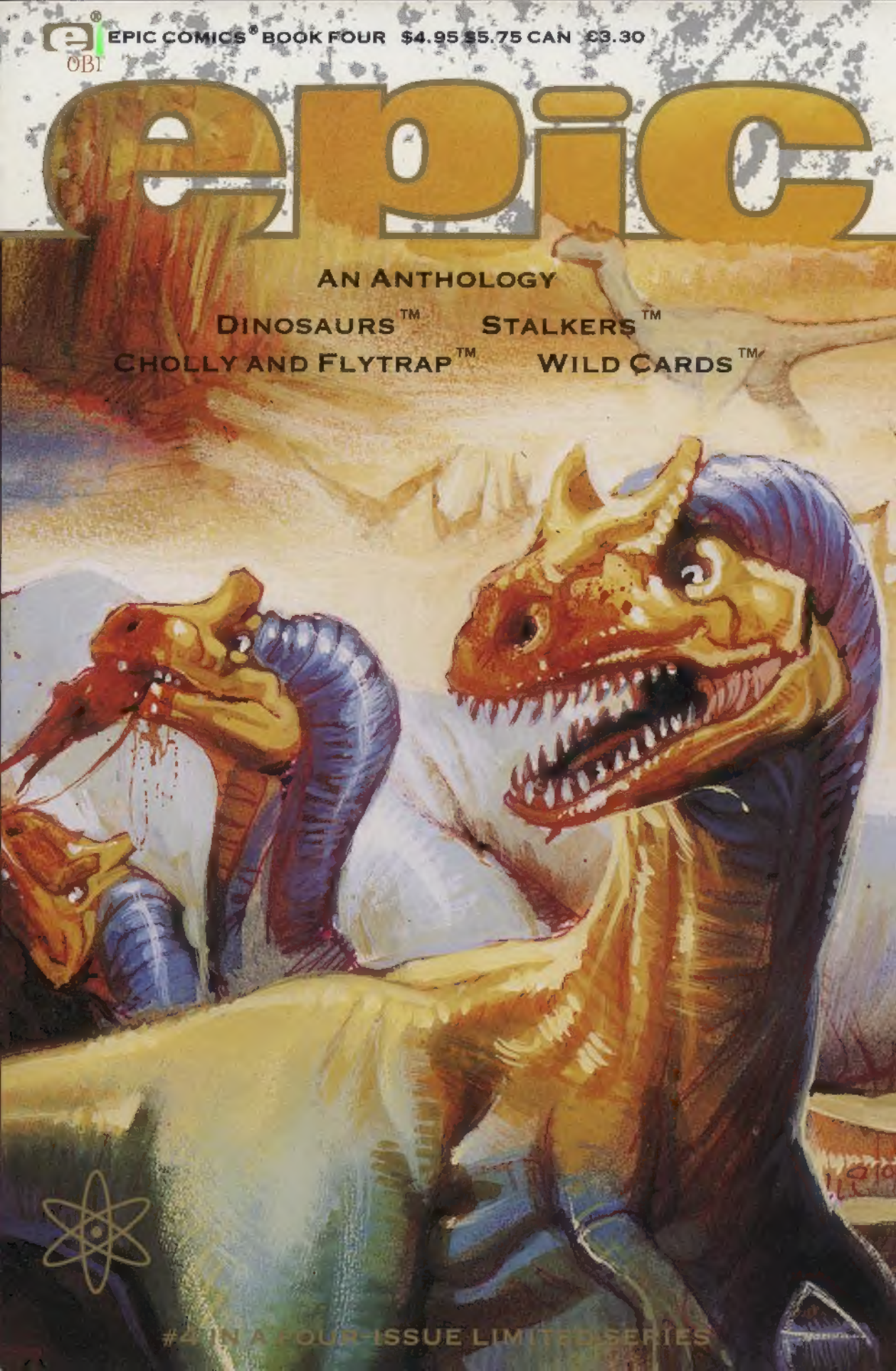
DINOSAURS™ STALKERS™

CHOLLY AND FLYTRAP™ WILD CARDS™



#4 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

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Contents

Page 3

DINOSAURS

"SUCCESSION"

STEVE WHITE

DAN ABNETT

Script

JOHN McCREA

Art

Page 12

STALKERS

"THE TERRORIST"

Part 4

MARK VERHEIDEN

Script

D'ISRAELI

Art

Page 24

CHOLLY AND

FLYTRAP

Part 2

BOB BURDEN

Script

ARTHUR SUYDAM

Art

Page 36

WILD CARDS

"BORDERLINES"

LEWIS SHINER

MELINDA M. SNODGRASS

Script

JOHN M. BURNS

Art

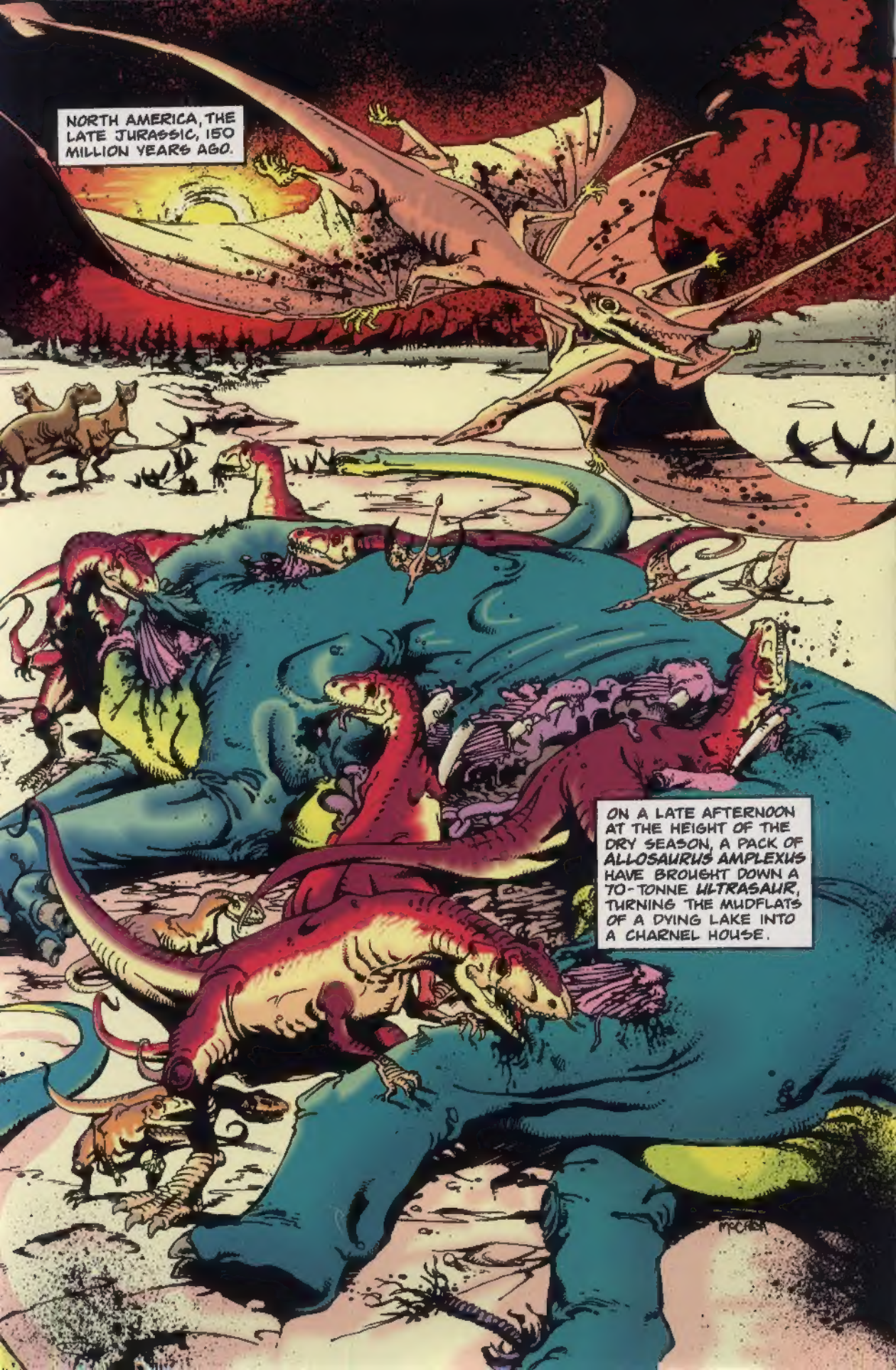
WOODROW PHOENIX

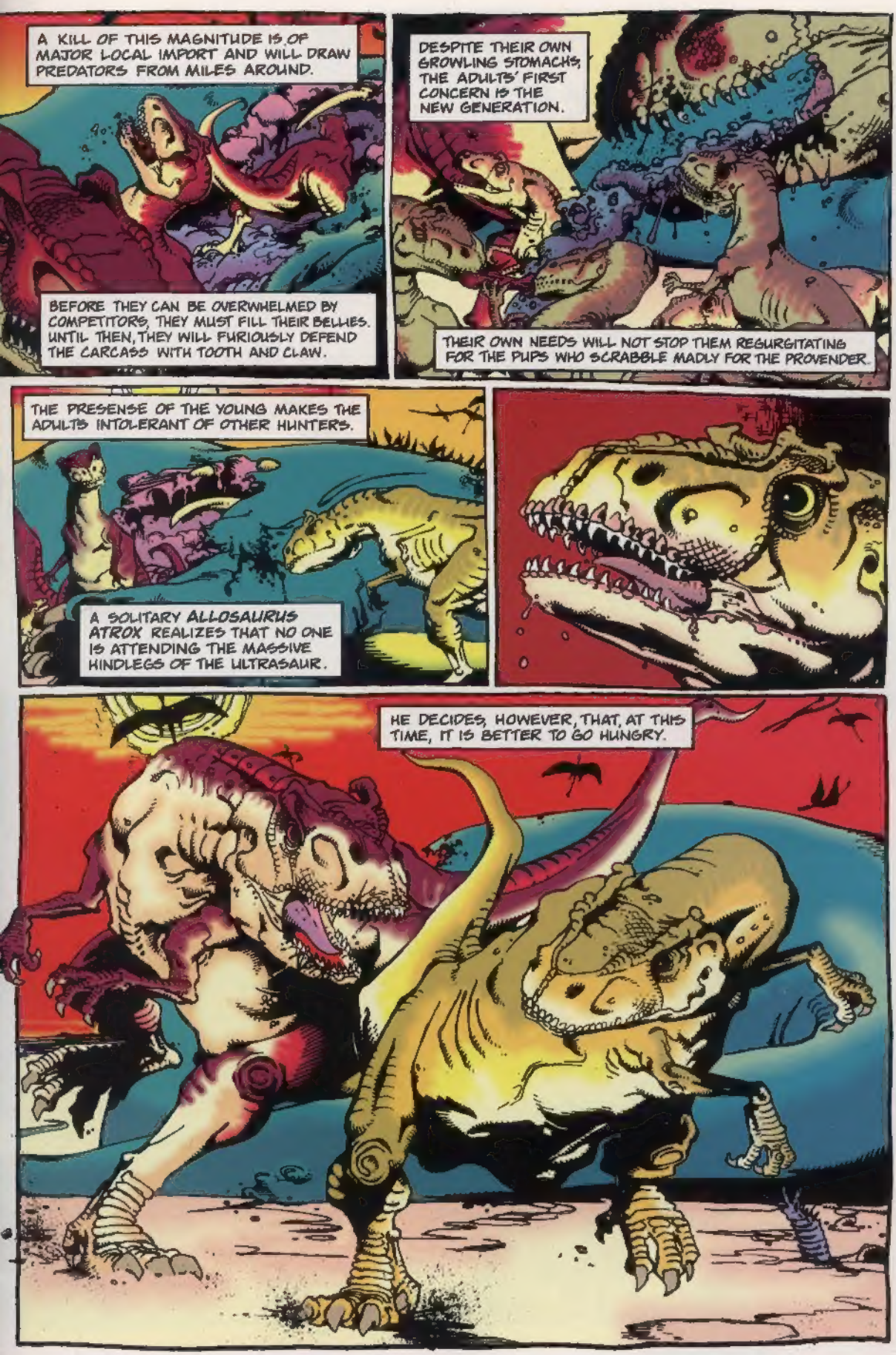
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS

Letterers

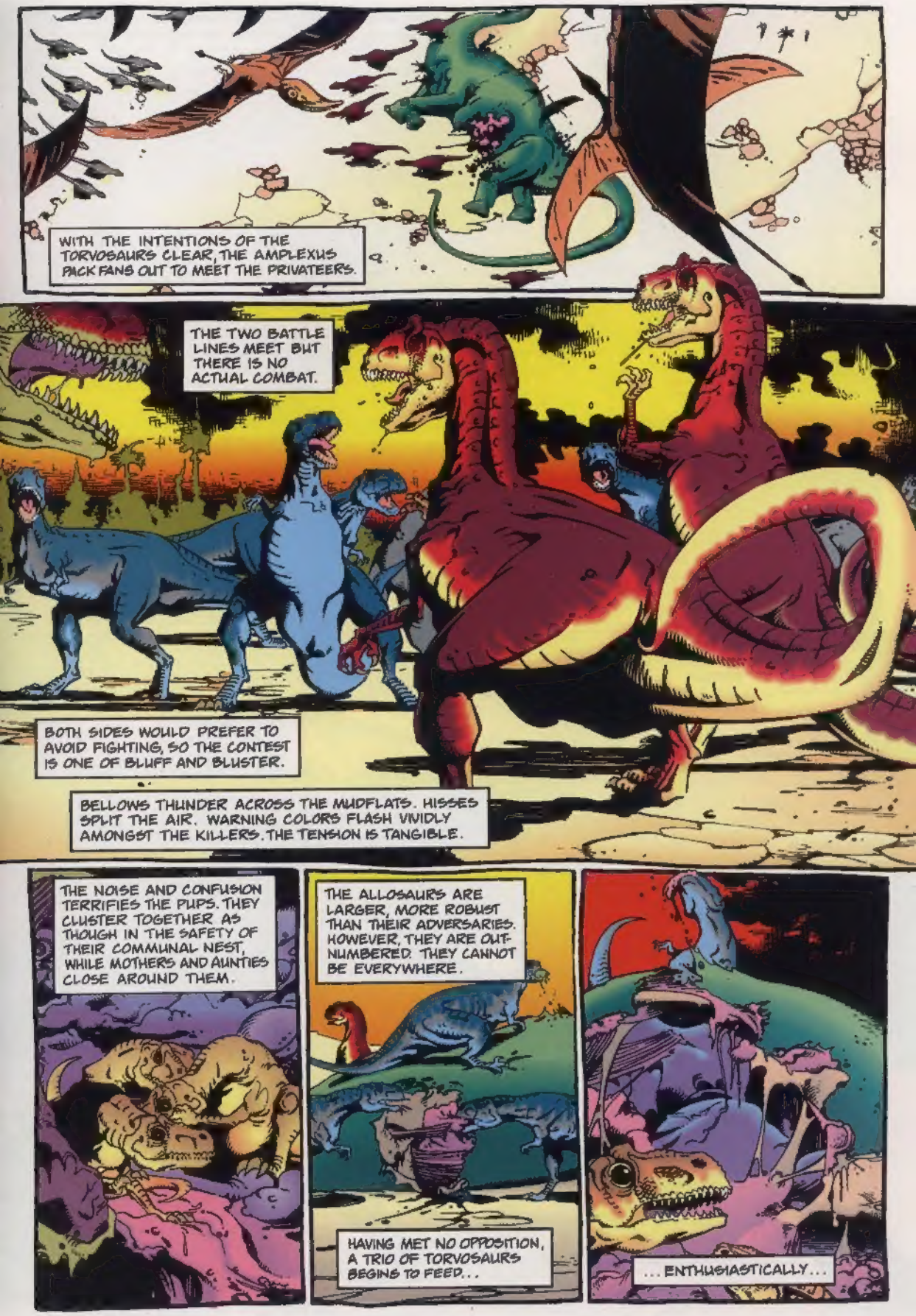
COLIN MACNEIL

Cover


NORTH AMERICA, THE LATE JURASSIC, 150 MILLION YEARS AGO.
ON A LATE AFTERNOON AT THE HEIGHT OF THE DRY SEASON, A PACK OF ALLOSAURUS AMPLEXUS HAVE BROUGHT DOWN A 70-TONNE ULTRASAUR, TURNING THE MUDFLATS OF A DYING LAKE INTO A CHARNEL HOUSE.

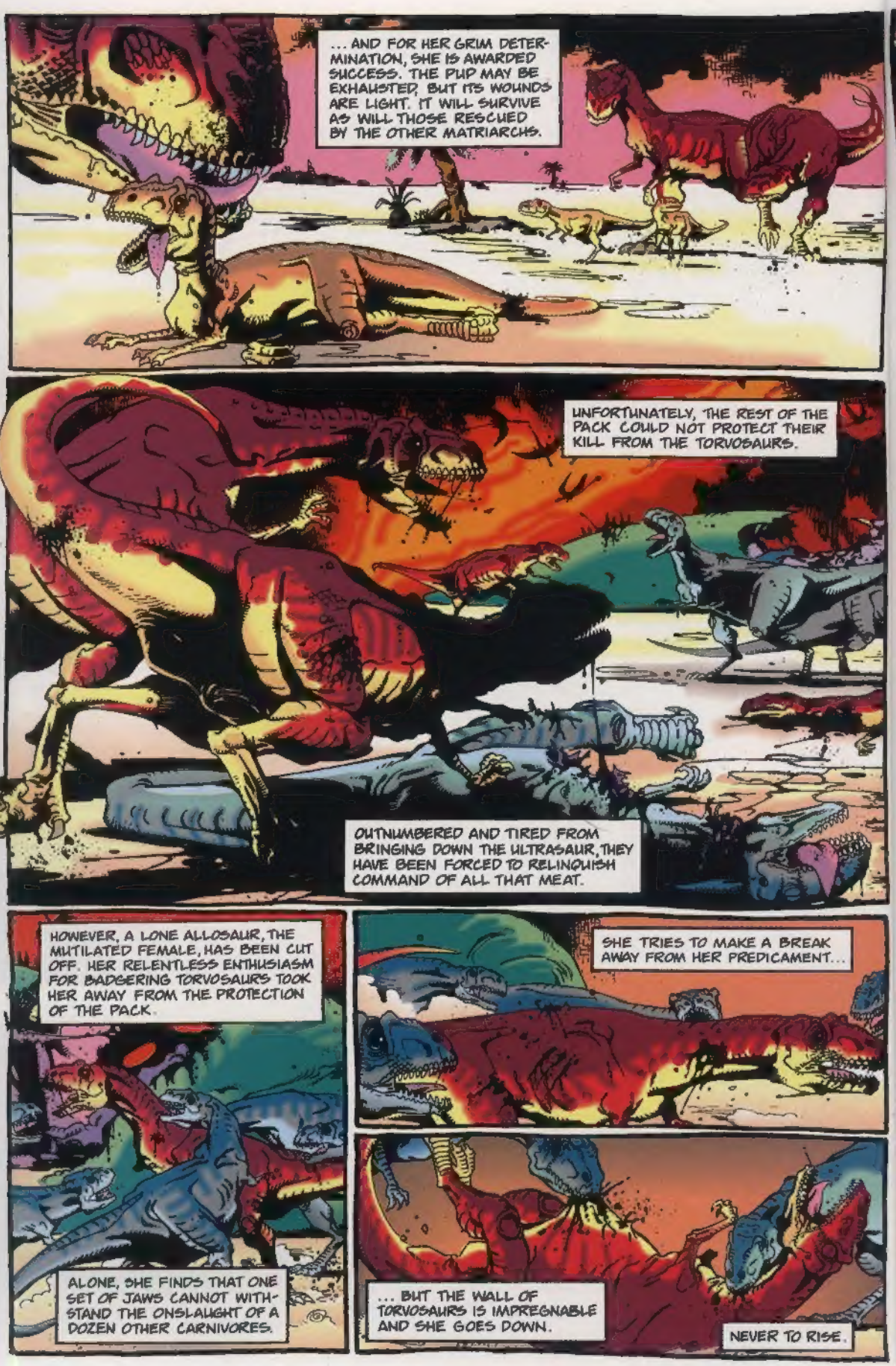

A KILL OF THIS MAGNITUDE IS OF MAJOR LOCAL IMPORT AND WILL DRAW PREDATORS FROM MILES AROUND.
BEFORE THEY CAN BE OVERWHELMED BY COMPETITORS, THEY MUST FILL THEIR BELLIES. UNTIL THEN, THEY WILL FURIOUSLY DEFEND THE CARCASS WITH TOOTH AND CLAW.
DESPITE THEIR OWN GROWLING STOMACHS, THE ADULTS' FIRST CONCERN IS THE NEW GENERATION.
THEIR OWN NEEDS WILL NOT STOP THEM REGURGITATING FOR THE PUPS WHO SCRABBLE MADLY FOR THE PROVENDER.
THE PRESENSE OF THE YOUNG MAKES THE ADULTS INTOLERANT OF OTHER HUNTERS.
A SOLITARY ALLOSAURUS ATROX REALIZES THAT NO ONE IS ATTENDING THE MASSIVE HINDLEGS OF THE ULTRASAUR.
HE DECIDES, HOWEVER, THAT, AT THIS TIME, IT IS BETTER TO GO HUNGRY.

...AS THE ATROX MAKES GOOD HIS ESCAPE.
... A DISTURBANCE AMONGST THE PTEROSAUR FLOCKS DRAWS THE ATTENTION OF THE GIANT KILLER...
SWATHED IN THE SMACK AND RUSTLE OF LEATHERY WINGS, A HUGE PACK OF TORVOSAURUS TANNERI EMERGE FROM AMONGST THE EVERGREENS.
THEY HAD BEEN TRACKING THE SAME ULTRASAUR HERD AS THE ALLOSAURS BUT HAD FAILED TO SCORE A KILL.
NOW THEY ARE HUNGRY. THE LAWS OF NATURE TELL THEM THAT IF THEY CAN'T CATCH THEIR OWN FOOD, THEY CAN STEAL IT FROM THOSE MORE FORTUNATE.


WITH THE INTENTIONS OF THE TORVOSAURS CLEAR, THE AMPLEXUS PACK FANS OUT TO MEET THE PRIVATEERS.
THE TWO BATTLE LINES MEET BUT THERE IS NO ACTUAL COMBAT.
BOTH SIDES WOULD PREFER TO AVOID FIGHTING, SO THE CONTEST IS ONE OF BLUFF AND BLUSTER.
BELLOWS THUNDER ACROSS THE MUDFLATS. HISSES SPLIT THE AIR. WARNING COLORS FLASH VIVIDLY AMONGST THE KILLERS. THE TENSION IS TANGIBLE.
THE NOISE AND CONFUSION TERRIFIES THE PUPS. THEY CLUSTER TOGETHER AS THOUGH IN THE SAFETY OF THEIR COMMUNAL NEST, WHILE MOTHERS AND AUNTIES CLOSE AROUND THEM.
THE ALLOSAURS ARE LARGER, MORE ROBUST THAN THEIR ADVERSARIES. HOWEVER, THEY ARE OUT-NUMBERED. THEY CANNOT BE EVERYWHERE.
HAVING MET NO OPPOSITION, A TRIO OF TORVOSAURS BEGINS TO FEED...
...ENTHUSIASTICALLY...

...TOO ENTHUSIASTICALLY...
THE SUDDEN ARRIVAL OF THE TORVOSAURS IN THEIR MIDST SCATTERS THE PUPS...
...AND ATTRACTS THE FULL FURY OF THE FEMALE ALLOSAURS.
PARTICULARLY ATTENTIVE IS A YOUNG, BARELY MATURE COW WHO LOST HER FOREARM TO A TORVOSAUR AS A JUVENILE. HER HATRED SEEMS GENUINE ENOUGH.
THE SUDDEN VIOLENCE OF THE ASSAULT BREAKS THE TENSION LIKE A GUNSHOT. FIGHTING EXPLODES AMONGST THE TIGHTLY-PACKED RANKS OF THE RIVAL CLANS.
THE YOUNG ALLOSAURS STAND TOO TERRIFIED TO MOVE, OR MILL IN PANIC, BLEATING HELPLESSLY FOR THEIR MOTHERS.

EITHER WAY, THEY SUDDENLY FIND THEMSELVES PREY FOR ANY OPPORTUNIST QUICK OR STRONG ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THEM.
HOWEVER, THE DESPERATE CALLS OF THE PUPS HAVE NOT GONE UNHEEDED.
HUNTER, AS IS SO OFTEN THE WAY, BECOMES THE HUNTED.
SADLY FOR THE RESCUERS, NOT ALL THE ATTACKERS ARE AS SMALL AS ORNITHOLESTES.
YET THIS MATTERS LITTLE TO THE FEMALE ALLOSAUR RACING TO SAVE HER OFFSPRING FROM THE JAWS OF A PURSUING CERATOSAUR.
ALL SHE CARES ABOUT IS THE WELL-BEING OF HER CHILDREN...


... AND FOR HER GRIM DETERMINATION, SHE IS AWARDED SUCCESS. THE PUP MAY BE EXHAUSTED, BUT ITS WOUNDS ARE LIGHT. IT WILL SURVIVE AS WILL THOSE RESCUED BY THE OTHER MATRIARCHS.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE REST OF THE PACK COULD NOT PROTECT THEIR KILL FROM THE TORVOSAURS.
OUTNUMBERED AND TIRED FROM BRINGING DOWN THE ULTRASAUR, THEY HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RELINQUISH COMMAND OF ALL THAT MEAT.
HOWEVER, A LONE ALLOSAUR, THE MUTILATED FEMALE, HAS BEEN CUT OFF. HER RELENTLESS ENTHUSIASM FOR BADGERING TORVOSAURS TOOK HER AWAY FROM THE PROTECTION OF THE PACK.
ALONE, SHE FINDS THAT ONE SET OF JAWS CANNOT WITHSTAND THE ONSLAUGHT OF A DOZEN OTHER CARNIVORES.
SHE TRIES TO MAKE A BREAK AWAY FROM HER PREDICAMENT...
... BUT THE WALL OF TORVOSAURS IS IMPREGNABLE AND SHE GOES DOWN.
NEVER TO RISE.

HER SCREAMS ARE SOON STILLED HER PACK LOOKS ON, DOES NOTHING, IT'S NO LONGER THEIR FIGHT
AS THEY MOVE OFF, A TORVOSAUR BARKS A SINGLE HARSH NOTE TO THE STAND OF TREES IN THE DISTANCE
STILL NERVOUS, A WARY PHALANX OF ADULTS ESCORTS THE PACK BROOD FROM ITS COVER AMONGST THE CONIFERS AND FERNS
WITH THEIR PRIZE SECURED, SEVERAL ADULTS MOVE OUT TO MEET THEIR OWN BEVY OF PUPS AND BRING THEM TO THIS STILL-MOUNTAINOUS MASS OF FLESH
THEY HAVE THEIR OWN HUNGRY MOUTHS TO FEED

THEIR NUMBERS DEPLETED, THE ALLOSAURS MOVE OFF TO FIND A PLACE TO SEE THEM THROUGH THE NIGHT
THEY FEEL NO ANGER OR BITTERNESS, BUT THE PUPS WHINE WITH HUNGER
YET THE ULTRASAUR HERD CONTINUES TO BROWSE THE TREES ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE LAKE
TOMORROW, THE ALLOSAUR PACK WILL RETURN TO TRY THEIR LUCK AGAIN

STALKERS

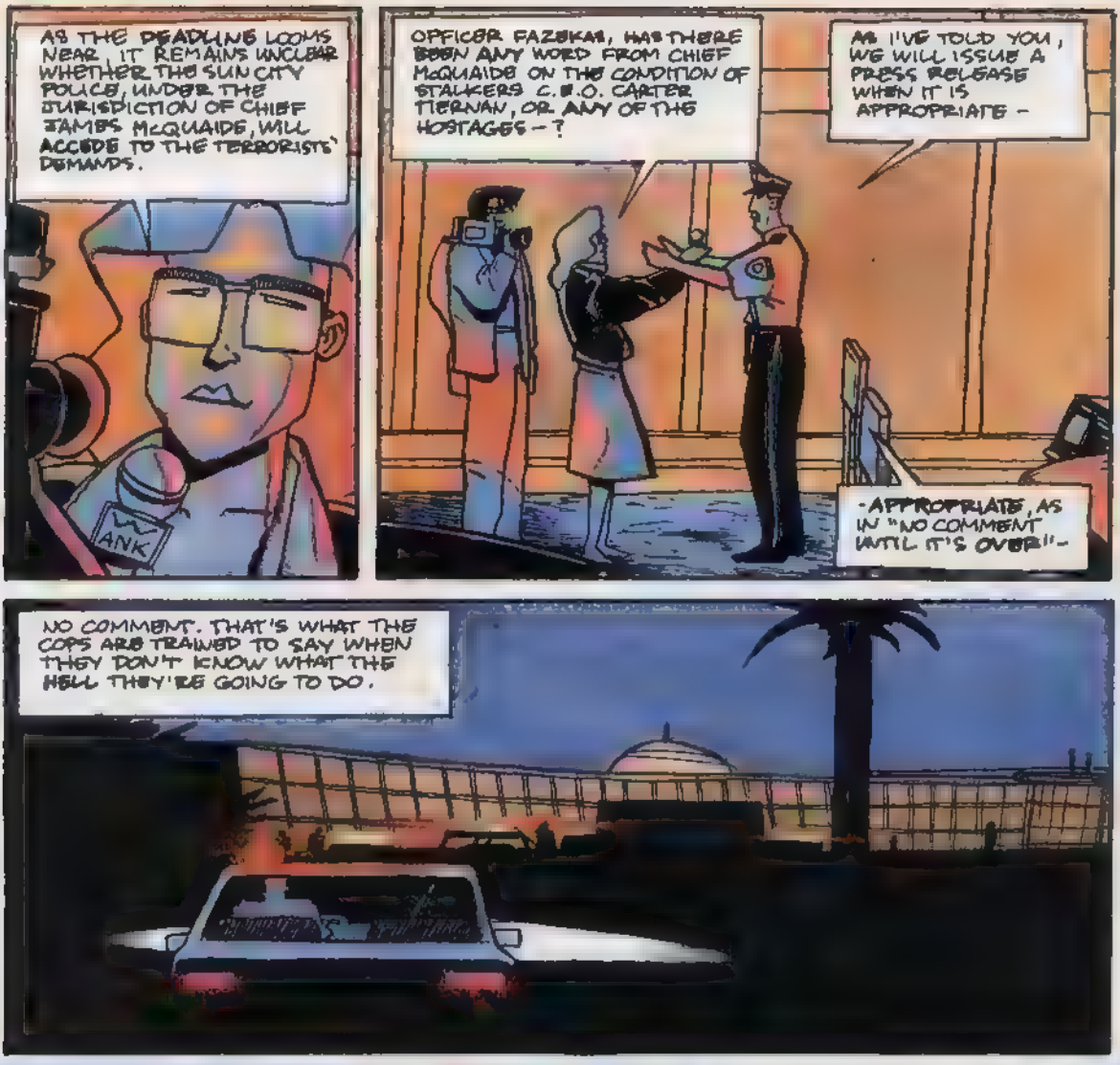
CREATED BY
MARC VIDAL, JOSEP M. BENET AND JAN STRNAD

[illegible] DECADES, NATIONALIZED INDUS[illegible] A THING OF THE PAST. [illegible] LL BE ABLE TO BUY INTO [illegible] STMENT PORTFOLIO [illegible] EVEN LAW IN GREECE.

[illegible] STMENT IN [illegible] R EARNINGS. THE [illegible] SWAT TEAM, PART [illegible] CIAL FORCES, PART [illegible] THIS [illegible] IS [illegible] ON [illegible] THE [illegible] [illegible] THE COST [illegible] SCENARIO WHERE HOSTAGE'S [illegible] ARE AT STAKE, WHERE [illegible] WILL HOLD A GUN [illegible] TEMPLE AND [illegible] TRADITIONAL AVERAGE [illegible] FOR THESE AND DAY-TO-DAY [illegible] ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE A HOSTAGE [illegible] IN THE [illegible] TAKE [illegible] FOR LIFE. [illegible] LL RANGE [illegible] PERFECTLY WHERE THE [illegible] SION FOR THE TARGET [illegible] IS SHOT AT [illegible] ARE QUESTIONS [illegible] ASK FOR THE HOSTAGES. STILL [illegible] CAN TAKE IN [illegible] TIME WITHOUT [illegible] CRACKING A [illegible] FACE.

[illegible] THE NEGOTIATION FACING MATT RAINES, [illegible] KNOWS THAT [illegible] WE GOES INTO ACTION. [illegible] GRIM REALITY [illegible] AS HE LOSES HIS [illegible] WIFE [illegible] AND [illegible] FINANCIAL WAR [illegible] ON WALL STREET. [illegible] FOR THE [illegible] OF [illegible] PRICE [illegible] ACCORDING TO THE SUCCESS OF HIS MISSION.

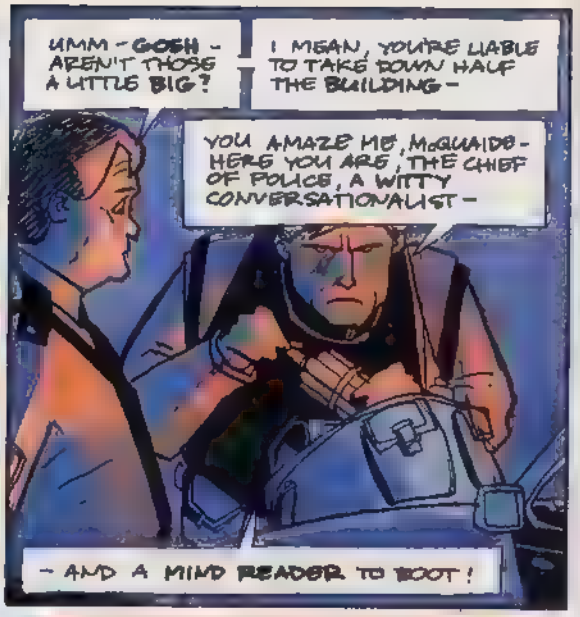
STILL [illegible] A MERCENARY [illegible] ASSAULT MEANS [illegible] RE-MORTGAGE YOUR HOUSE. [illegible] YOU CAN ALWAYS TAKE [illegible] ITEMS FROM THE EXTENSIVE LINE OF STALKERS MERCHANDISE. [illegible] FALLING [illegible] ENTERPRISE IS BIG BUSINESS.


AS THE DEADLINE LOOMS NEAR, IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE SUN CITY POLICE, UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF CHIEF JAMES MCQUAIDE, WILL ACCEDE TO THE TERRORISTS' DEMANDS.
ANK
OFFICER FAZEKAS, HAS THERE BEEN ANY WORD FROM CHIEF MCQUAIDE ON THE CONDITION OF STALKERS C.E.O. CARTER TIERNAN, OR ANY OF THE HOSTAGES—?
AS I'VE TOLD YOU, WE WILL ISSUE A PRESS RELEASE WHEN IT IS APPROPRIATE—
-APPROPRIATE, AS IN "NO COMMENT UNTIL IT'S OVER!"-
NO COMMENT. THAT'S WHAT THE COPS ARE TRAINED TO SAY WHEN THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL THEY'RE GOING TO DO.

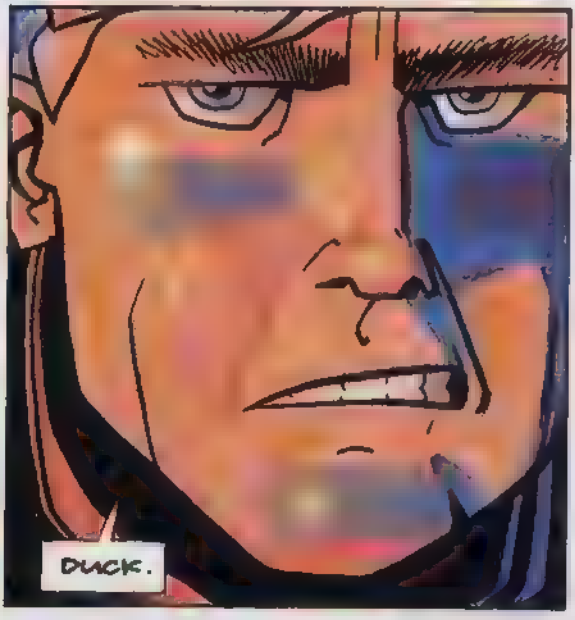
"NO COMMENT" THIS.
Chapter Four
LIQUIDATION

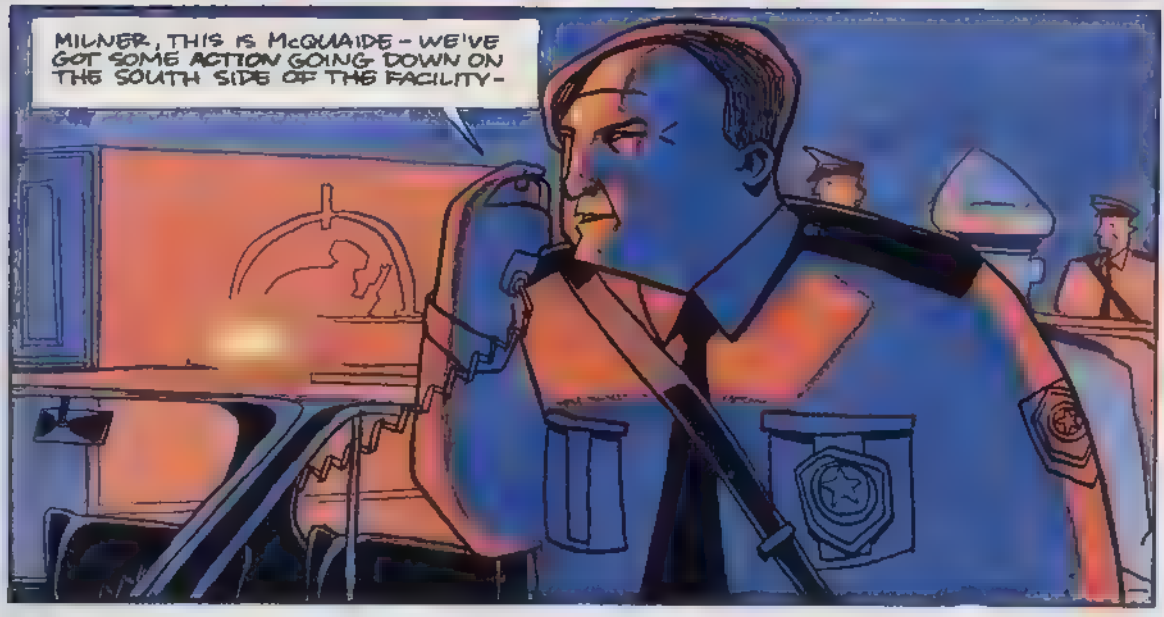
C'MON, FAZEKAS - THE PUBLIC HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW -
DARN IT, I SAID NO-ONE WOULD BE ALLOWED THROUGH AND I MEANT NO -
-ONE - OH MY GOD!
I-I'M SORRY, BUT I'VE BEEN ORDERED TO KEEP THIS AREA C-CLEAR-
YOU DO THAT.
WE WOULDN'T WANT ANYONE TO GET HURT, NOW WOULD WE?
JEEZ - I THAT WAS MATT RAINES - HEAD OF THE PHOENIX STALKERS FRANCHISE UNTIL 6:30 TONIGHT -
- WHEN HIS BOSS CARTER TIERNAN FIRED HIS ASS -
"WHAT THE HELL'S HE DOING HERE?"
RAINES! THANK GOD -
THEY'VE TAKEN TIERNAN HOSTAGE - I THINK HE'S WOUNDED. I'VE GOT MEN SURROUNDING THE BUILDING, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO -
TELL YOUR MEN TO BACK OFF.
BACK OFF?! FORTY-FIVE MINUTES AND THEY'RE GOING TO START OFFING CIVILIANS -
THAT'S OKAY. IN FORTY MINUTES IT WON'T MATTER.
I'M GOING IN.

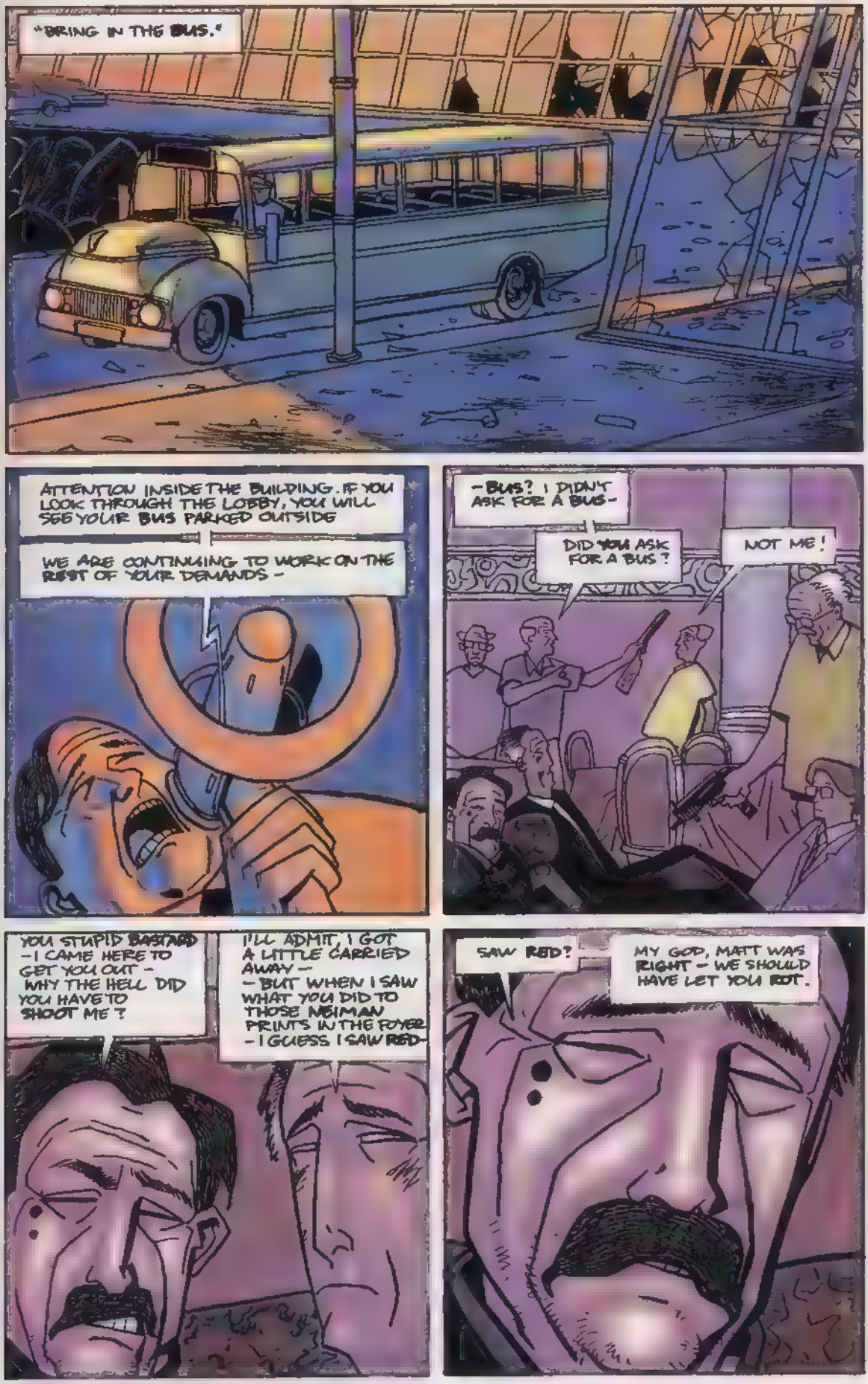
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? ALONE?
CRUMPHHL!
I DON'T SEE ANYBODY VOLUNTEERING TO TAG ALONG - DO YOU?


UMM - GOSH - AREN'T THOSE A LITTLE BIG?
I MEAN, YOU'RE LIABLE TO TAKE DOWN HALF THE BUILDING -
YOU AMAZE ME, McQUAIDE - HERE YOU ARE, THE CHIEF OF POLICE, A WITTY CONVERSATIONALIST -
- AND A MIND READER TO BOOT!

GET THE TERRORISTS ON THE HORN - SEE IF YOU CAN DRAW THEIR ATTENTION TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE RESORT WHILE I MOVE IN.
YEAH, SURE, OKAY -
-THEN WHAT?

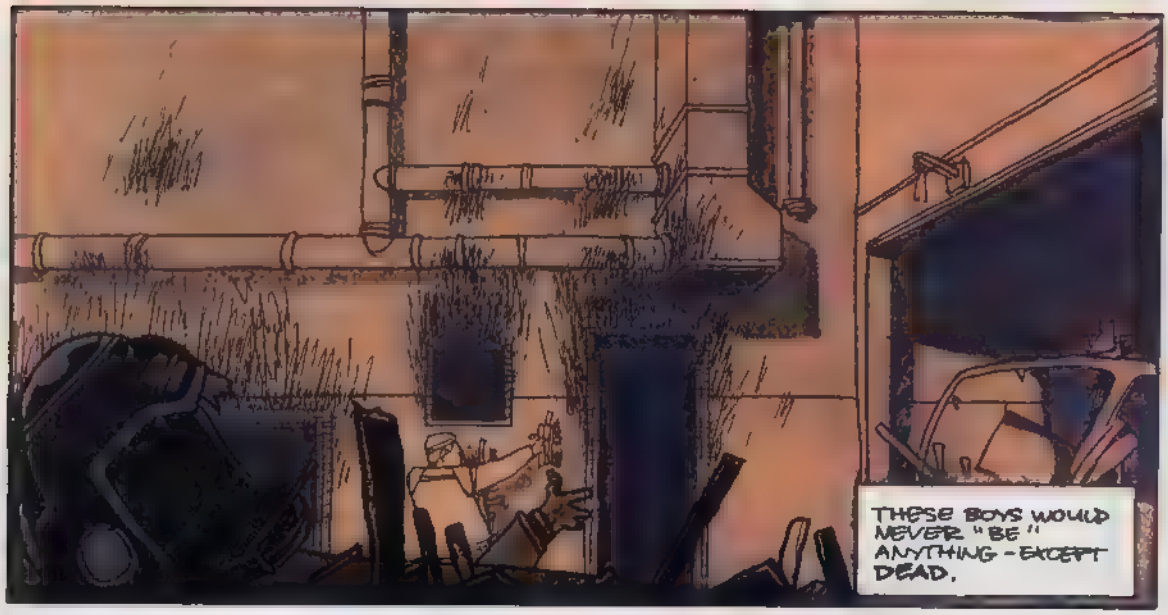

DUCK.

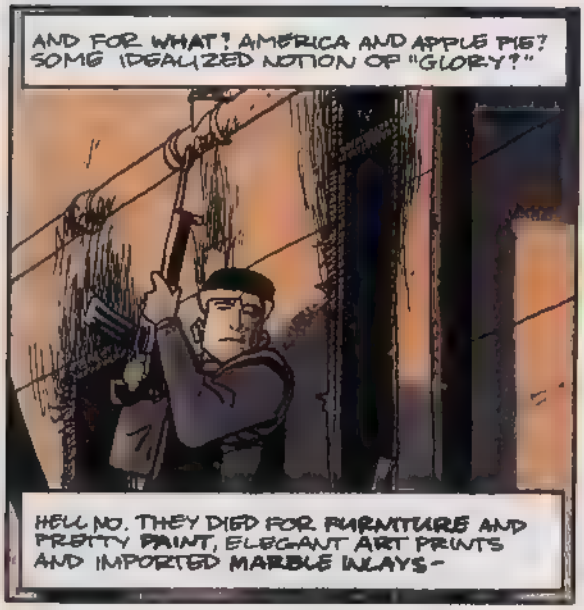

MILNER, THIS IS McQUAIDE - WE'VE GOT SOME ACTION GOING DOWN ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE FACILITY -

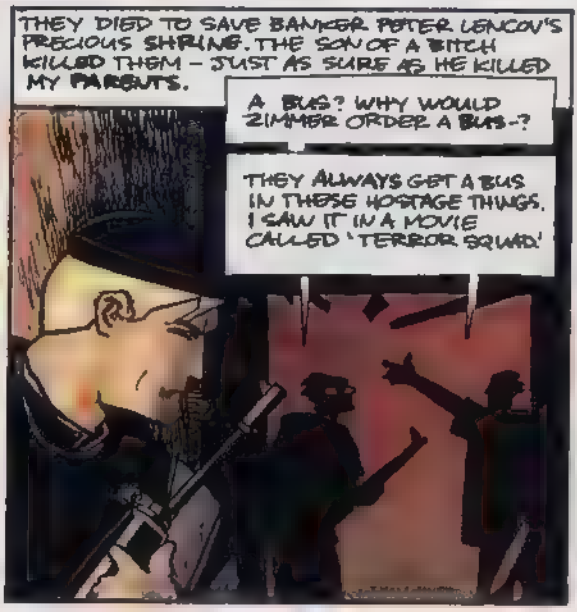

"BRING IN THE BUS."
ATTENTION INSIDE THE BUILDING. IF YOU LOOK THROUGH THE LOBBY, YOU WILL SEE YOUR BUS PARKED OUTSIDE
WE ARE CONTINUING TO WORK ON THE REST OF YOUR DEMANDS -
-BUS? I DIDN'T ASK FOR A BUS-
DID YOU ASK FOR A BUS?
NOT ME!
YOU STUPID BASTARD -I CAME HERE TO GET YOU OUT - WHY THE HELL DID YOU HAVE TO SHOOT ME?
I'LL ADMIT, I GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY - -BUT WHEN I SAW WHAT YOU DID TO THOSE MEIMAN PRINTS IN THE FOYER -I GUESS I SAW RED-
SAW RED?
MY GOD, MATT WAS RIGHT - WE SHOULD HAVE LET YOU ROT.

SO. IT HAD COME TO THIS.

THE STALKERS BROCHURE MAKES A BIG DEAL OUT OF ARMED COMBAT, BUT THAT "BE ALL YOU CAN BE" CRAP RINGS HOLLOW WHEN YOU SEE THE END RESULT.
POOR, STUPID KID.


THESE BOYS WOULD NEVER "BE" ANYTHING - EXCEPT DEAD.


AND FOR WHAT? AMERICA AND APPLE PIE? SOME IDEALIZED NOTION OF "GLORY?"
HELL NO. THEY DIED FOR FURNITURE AND PRETTY PAINT, ELEGANT ART PRINTS AND IMPORTED MARBLE INLAYS -

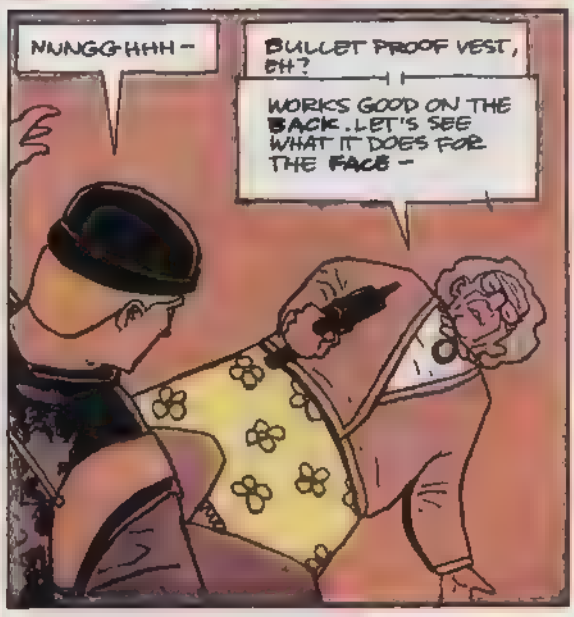

THEY DIED TO SAVE BANKER PETER LENCOV'S PRECIOUS SHRINE. THE SON OF A BITCH KILLED THEM - JUST AS SURE AS HE KILLED MY PARENTS.
A BUS? WHY WOULD ZIMMER ORDER A BUS -?
THEY ALWAYS GET A BUS IN THESE HOSTAGE THINGS. I SAW IT IN A MOVIE CALLED 'TERROR SQUAD'

I WAS GOING TO PUT AN END TO IT, ONCE AND FOR ALL.
SHOW'S OVER, BOYS –
BRRIIIP!
GAYYGH!
AGGHH!

THEY'RE COMING THROUGH THE BACK!
COVER THEM! IF IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE LOSING IT, TAKE THEM OUT –

WHAT AM I DOING HERE – WHAT THE HELL AM I –

AGGHHH –
BRRIIPPPP!


NUNGGHHH –
BULLET PROOF VEST, EH?
WORKS GOOD ON THE BACK. LET'S SEE WHAT IT DOES FOR THE FACE –

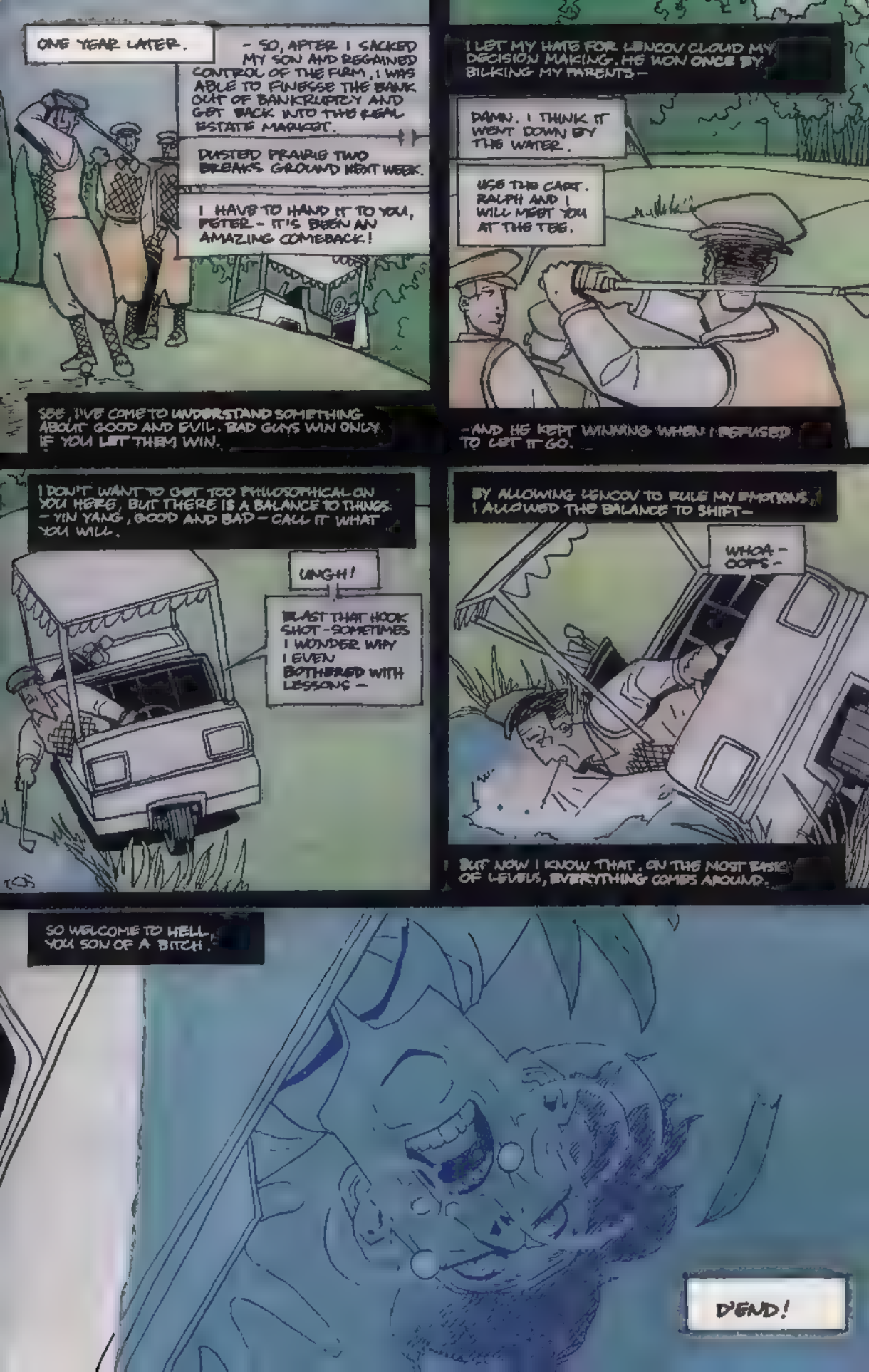
YEAH. LET'S.
PLOOM!
I'VE BEEN HIDING IN THE RAFTERS FOR HOURS - EVER SINCE TIERNAN WAS CAPTURED BY THOSE BASTARDS -
WHERE ARE ALL THE OTHERS?
MAYBE THERE AREN'T ANY OTHERS. JUST YOU AND ME.
THEN YOU AND ME IT IS.
LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.
THIS IS CRAZY - THEY'RE NEVER GOING TO GIVE IN TO US -
I SAY WE BLOW THE HOSTAGES AWAY - MAKE OUR POINT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE HOSTAGES - I WANT LENCOV'S POWER - I WANT HIS BANK DISSOLVED -
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN HURT THESE BASTARDS - THROUGH THEIR WALLETS -
WE'RE NOT GIVING UP - NOT NOW, NOT EVER -
YOU KNOW WHAT'S FUNNY? I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING THIS GUY STANDS FOR -
- AND I'M GOING TO KILL HIM ALL THE SAME.

DROP 'EM!
BRRRII II P!
GAAAHHH - YOU FILTHY BAS -
AAAAH - RAINES -
ZUKKK!
AAAAH!
AAAGH - NOOO!

JESUS.
MY GOD. LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE.
THEY'RE DEAD. ALL DEAD.
THE SOFT WOOD SEEMS TO HAVE SUFFERED MOST - I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'LL REPAIR THE DAMAGE.
}KAK KAK E - YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IT, YOU ARROGANT PIG
YOU STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU - }OOF - THIS IS YOUR FAULT -
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT -
}NGGHE - YOU TOOK MORE THAN MONEY FROM YOUR INVESTORS - YOU STOLE THEIR DREAMS
YOU NEVER FELT AN INSTANT OF PITY FOR THE PEOPLE YOU DESTROYED - MY GOD, YOU NEVER WILL -
THAT'S WHY - }KAK - WHY I'M GOING TO KILL -
- oh God -

I ONLY REMEMBER BITS AND PIECES OF THE REST. I THINK I SAW TIERNAN DRAGGING LENCOV FROM THE BUILDING. CARTER NEVER WAS MUCH FOR INDEPENDENT THINKING.
C'MON, YOU PIECE OF SHIT - LET'S GO -
WAIT - ! NOT YET -
THEN I SAW THE GIRL - SO ALIVE JUST MINUTES BEFORE -
GOD HELP ME, I'D FORGOTTEN HER NAME -
KABOOM!
- AND THEN THERE WAS LIGHT.
WHAMM!

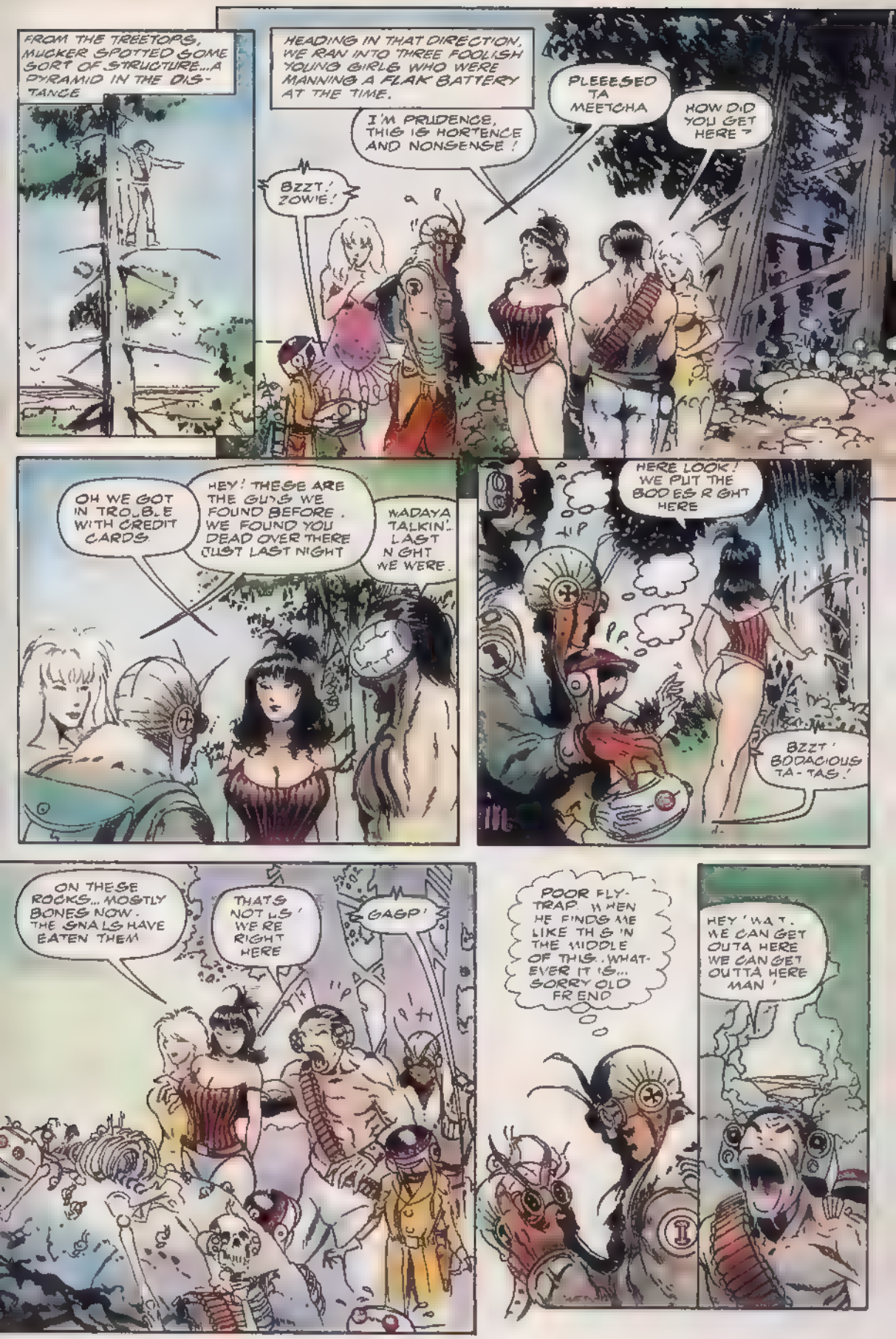
YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHERE I'M SPEAKING TO YOU FROM. I - I'M NOT REALLY SURE MYSELF -
- BUT I CAN SEE THINGS - FEEL THINGS FROM HERE -
THE PRESS PEOPLE WOULD GET ANOTHER HAND-OUT FROM THE STALKERS P.R. PEOPLE ONCE THE SMOKE CLEARED - AMAZING HOW A FEW CHOICE WORDS CAN CHANGE DISASTER INTO TRIUMPH -
ohhhh - SOMEBODY - SOMEBODY FIND ME A PHONE -
EXCEPT FOR POOR ALISSA, THERE WERE NO WORDS FOR HER. I LOVED HER, YOU KNOW. THAT SEEMED SO HARD TO SAY BEFORE -
I WISH I COULD SAY IT NOW.
IT WAS A CLOSED CASKET CEREMONY - GUESS THERE WASN'T MUCH LEFT AFTER THE EXPLOSION -
-AND THEN I WAS PUT TO REST BESIDE MY PARENTS. I THOUGHT THAT WAS NICE.
CONRAD RAINES
ELIZABETH RAINES
MATTHEW RAINES
I HAVEN'T THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT LENCOV SINCE THE EXPLOSION. ALL THE ANGER AND RAGE SEEMS TO HAVE VANISHED, REPLACED BY A SENSE OF CALM -
I'M NOT SURE WHERE I AM, BUT IT FEELS GOOD. FEELS LIKE HOME -
-AND BEST OF ALL LENCOV'S OFF THE GUEST LIST -


ONE YEAR LATER.
- SO, AFTER I SACKED MY SON AND REGAINED CONTROL OF THE FIRM, I WAS ABLE TO FINESSE THE BANK OUT OF BANKRUPTCY AND GET BACK INTO THE REAL ESTATE MARKET.
DUSTED PRAIRIE TWO BREAKS GROUND NEXT WEEK.
I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU, PETER - IT'S BEEN AN AMAZING COMEBACK!
SEE, I'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL. BAD GUYS WIN ONLY IF YOU LET THEM WIN.
I LET MY HATE FOR LENCOV CLOUD MY DECISION MAKING. HE WON ONCE BY BILKING MY PARENTS -
DAMN. I THINK IT WENT DOWN BY THE WATER.
USE THE CART. RALPH AND I WILL MEET YOU AT THE TEE.
-AND HE KEPT WINNING WHEN I REFUSED TO LET IT GO.
I DON'T WANT TO GET TOO PHILOSOPHICAL ON YOU HERE, BUT THERE IS A BALANCE TO THINGS - YIN YANG, GOOD AND BAD - CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL.
UNGH!
BLAST THAT HOOK SHOT - SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY I EVEN BOTHERED WITH LESSONS -
BY ALLOWING LENCOV TO RULE MY EMOTIONS, I ALLOWED THE BALANCE TO SHIFT -
WHOA - OOPS -
BUT NOW I KNOW THAT, ON THE MOST BASIC OF LEVELS, EVERYTHING COMES AROUND.
SO WELCOME TO HELL, YOU SON OF A BITCH.
D'END!

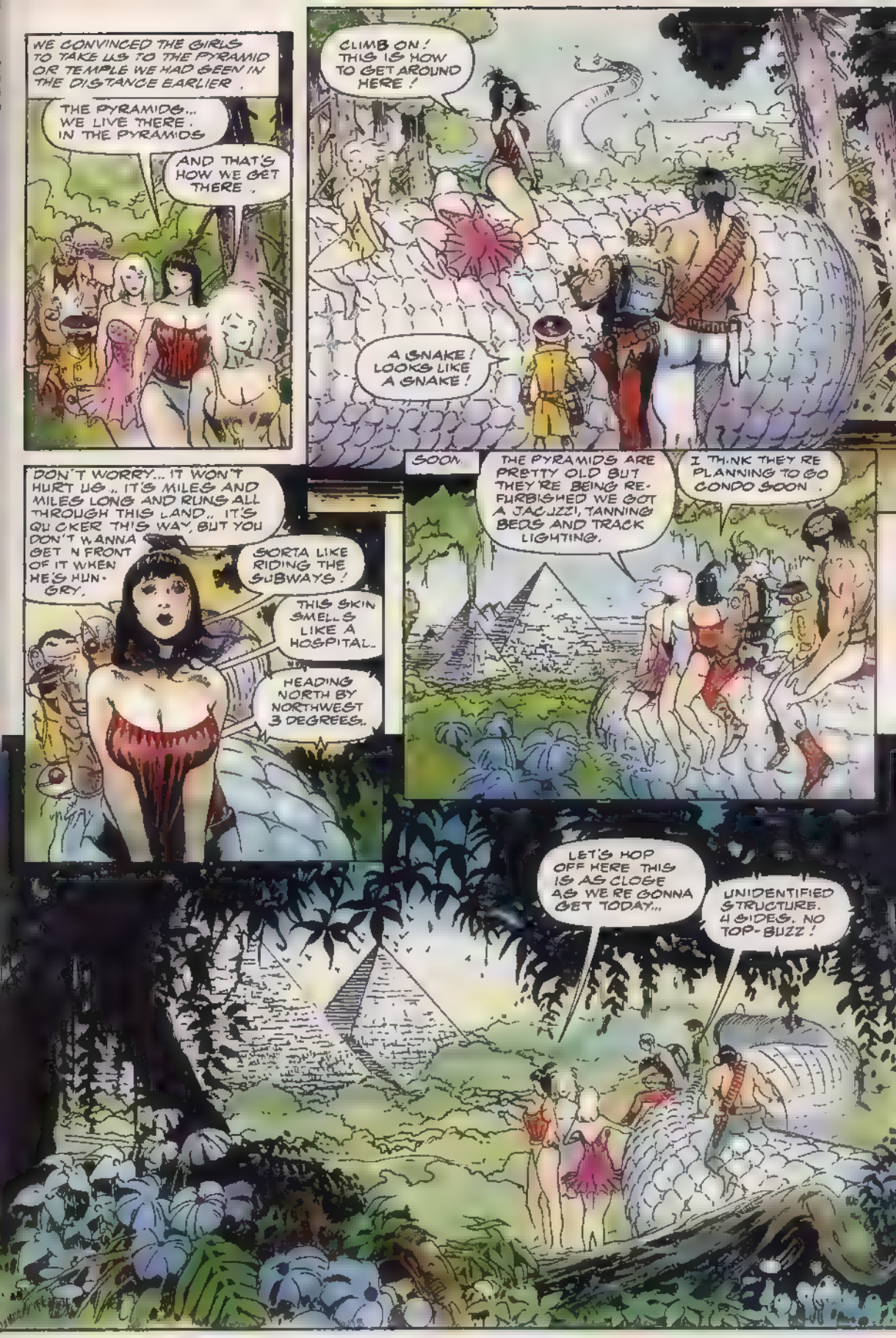
THE ADVENTURES OF CHOLLY AND FLYTRAP
BY ARTHUR SUYDAM AND BOB BURDEN
PART II
WHERE ARE WE?
JUST AS I THOUGHT! WE'RE OFF THE MAP! WE'RE OFF THE BLOODY MAP!
POP! BUZZ! LOOK! FRUIT! FRUIT TREES! I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS, BUT THERE'S BANANAS AND ORANGES..
FALL DOWN GO BOOM.

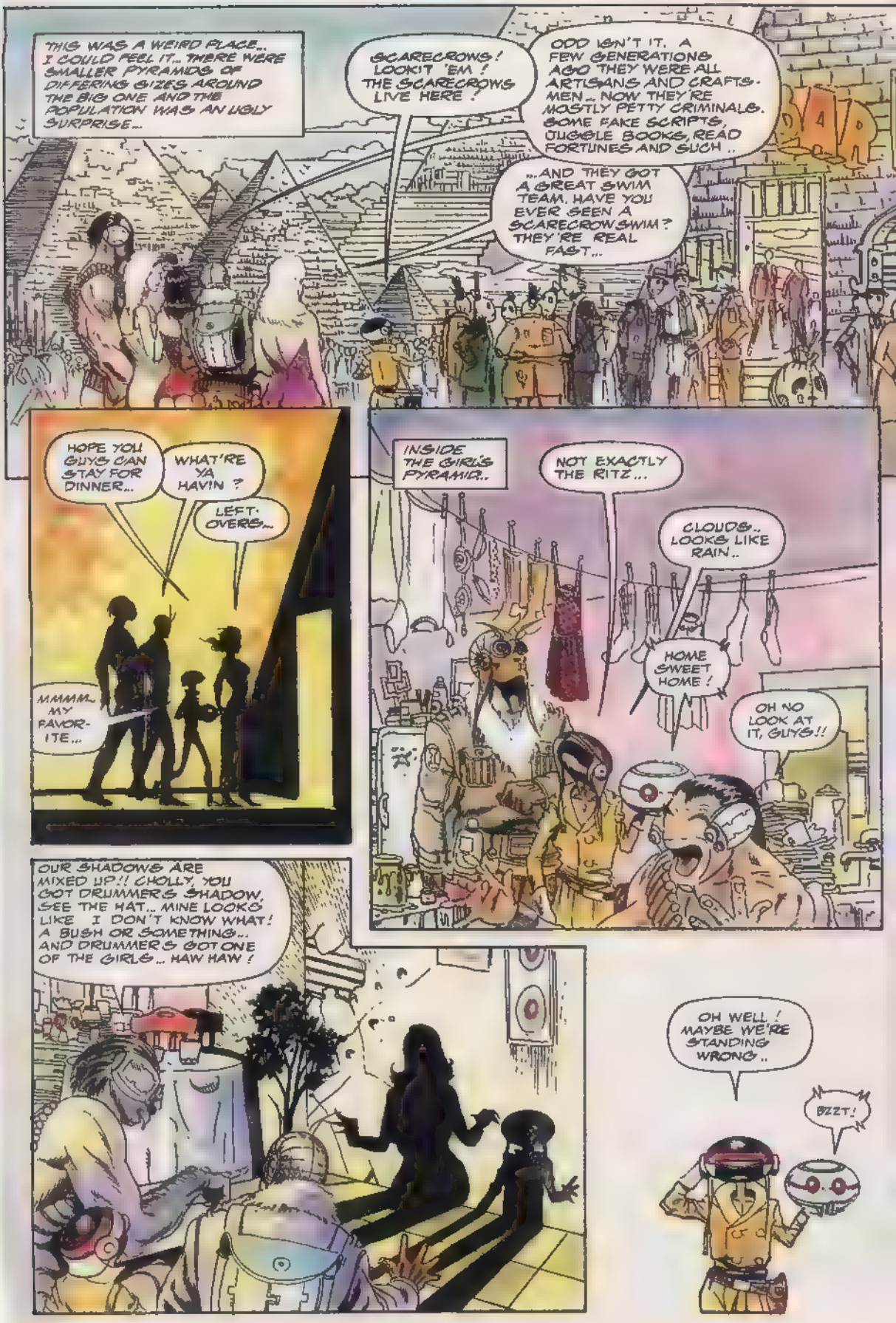
THIS ORANGE. LOOK AT THE JUICE.. A BLOOD ORANGE!
HEY, THIS BANANA'S GOT A BONE IN IT.
I'M HUNGRY ENOUGH TO EAT THE BLOW HOLE OUT OF A GOON-GATCH, BUDD'E'S! MMMMM. GOOD! SPIT OUT THE BONES!
BUZZ., POP", FOOD GOOD
THERE'S LIGHT IN THE DISTANCE!
LETS GO OVER THERE...
EVERY-BODY DANCE NOW, TOO.
DEVILS! LOOK AT THEM! THEY'RE THE REAL THING ALRIGHT! SEEN SOME BEFORE ON THE PAMPAS ALONG THE RIO GROUCHO!
THIS ONE WON'T FIT! YOU DUG THE HOLE WRONG, YOU STUPID SPIT!
HERE! YOU GOT IT IN UPSIDE DOWN! JUST BREAK THE BONES. BEND IT AROUND.
HERE WATCH THIS...
SNAP!
BLOODY MURDER!!
THOSE DEMONS ARE PUTTING BODIES IN HOLES! WHERE THE HELL ARE WE?!!! THIS GIVES ME A HEADACHE!
THERE, YOU SEE? NICE AND TIDY!
HUSH UP! YOU WAN 'EM TA HEAR US, NOW?!
!
FUD!

YOU HEAR THAT?
HEAR IT? "HUSH UP!", HE SAID!
YOU DID IT NOW! THEY HEARD US!
WE RAN AND RAN BUT THEY COULD SMELL US. SO WE RAN IN A BIG CIRCLE AGAIN AND AGAIN, (AN OLD INDIAN TRICK) THEN HID ON A TREE TRUNK ON THE ROUTE
AT DAWN.
WAKE UP, GUYS! IT'S MORNING!
NO DEVILS?
LOOKIT THIS PLACE. WHAT GRAND, GREAT, COUNTRY SIDE! ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?! WHAT'S I DOING HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT?!
WATER! A STREAM!
OH NO
BZZT!
WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S REAL BAD.
WHAT?
CAN'T YOU SEE? LOOK AT IT! LOOK AT IT! THE WATER! THE WATER'S FLOWING UP HILL!

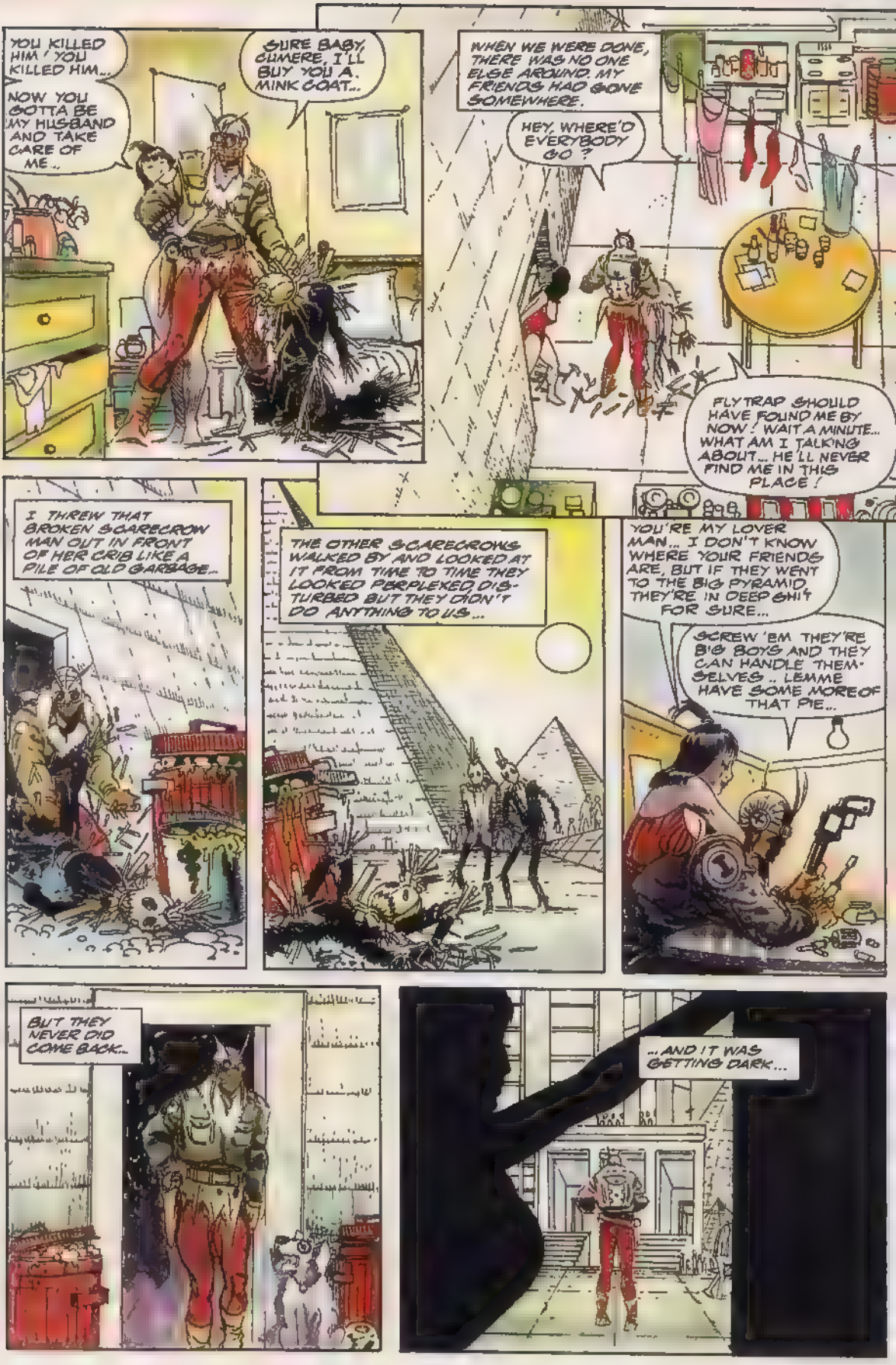

FROM THE TREETOPS, MUCKER SPOTTED SOME SORT OF STRUCTURE...A PYRAMID IN THE DISTANCE
HEADING IN THAT DIRECTION, WE RAN INTO THREE FOOLISH YOUNG GIRLS WHO WERE MANNING A FLAK BATTERY AT THE TIME.
I'M PRUDENCE, THIS IS HORTENCE AND NONSENSE!
BZZT! ZOWIE!
PLEEESED TA MEETCHA
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
OH WE GOT IN TROUBLE WITH CREDIT CARDS.
HEY! THESE ARE THE GUYS WE FOUND BEFORE. WE FOUND YOU DEAD OVER THERE JUST LAST NIGHT
WADAYA TALKIN'. LAST NIGHT WE WERE.
HERE LOOK! WE PUT THE BODIES RIGHT HERE
BZZT! BODACIOUS TA-TAS!
ON THESE ROCKS... MOSTLY BONES NOW. THE SNAILS HAVE EATEN THEM
THAT'S NOT US! WE'RE RIGHT HERE
GASP!
POOR FLY-TRAP. WHEN HE FINDS ME LIKE THIS IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS. WHATEVER IT IS... SORRY OLD FRIEND
HEY! WAIT. WE CAN GET OUTA HERE WE CAN GET OUTTA HERE MAN!

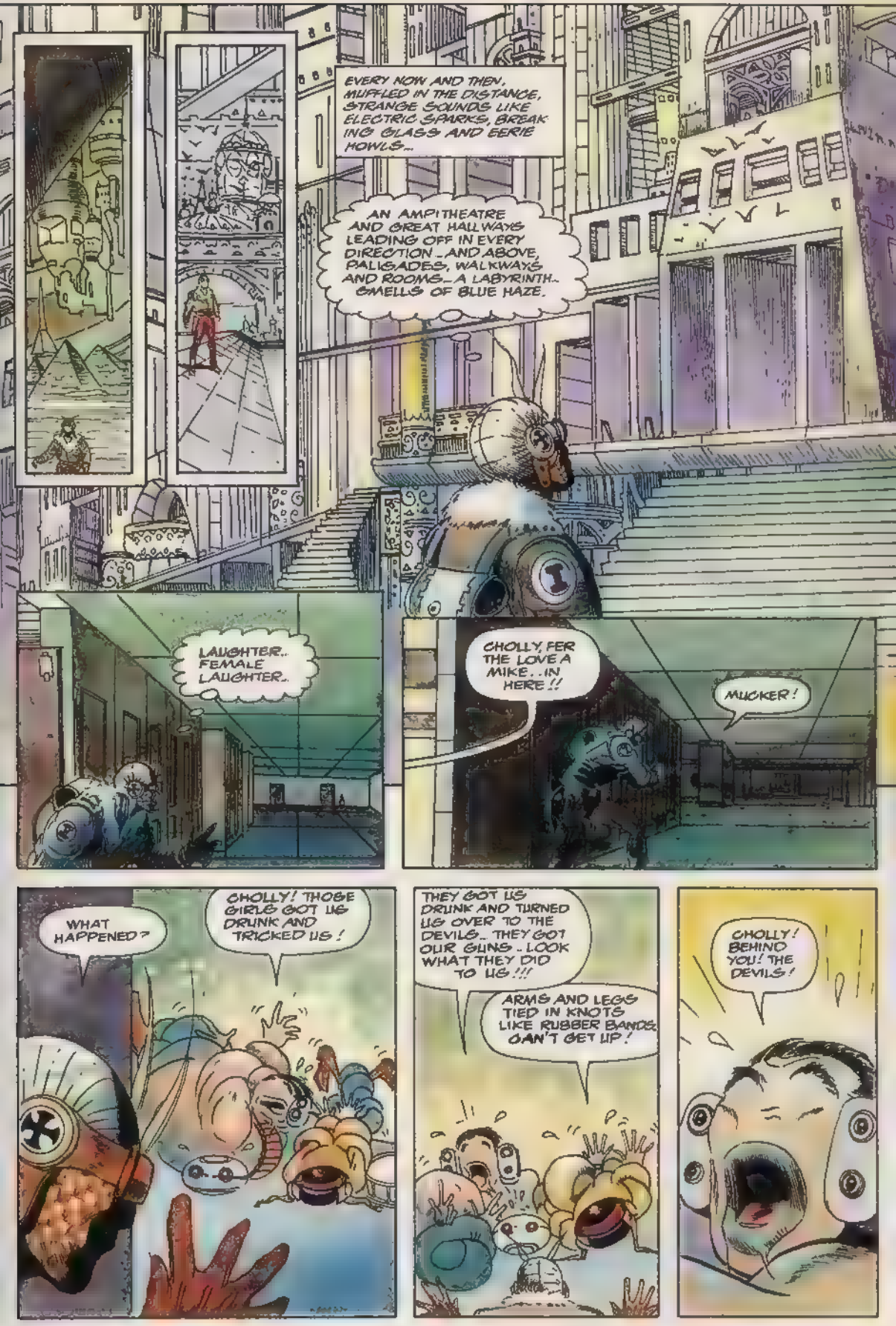
WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE ?
I AM
NO, I MEAN WHO'S IN CHARGE OF THIS WHOLE PLACE?
THIS PLACE.. ? THIS PLACE ISN'T A PLACE. ISN'T A PLACE, NO . IT'S A STATE OF MIND..
YEAH... EVERYONE'S IN CHARGE
OH MANNNN!! HEY, MUCKER, WHAT'RE YA DOING ?
BYAAAAAAR!
I M MIXING UP SOME MUCK.
AWW, MUCKER! DON'T DO THIS TO ME ! DON'T DO THIS TO ME !
MUCKER! YOU'RE LOOSIN' IT ! YOU'RE LOOSIN' IT TOO !
BANG
Ow!
THAT DID IT ! HEY, MAN.. I'M COMIN' OUT OF IT ! HOLD ON !

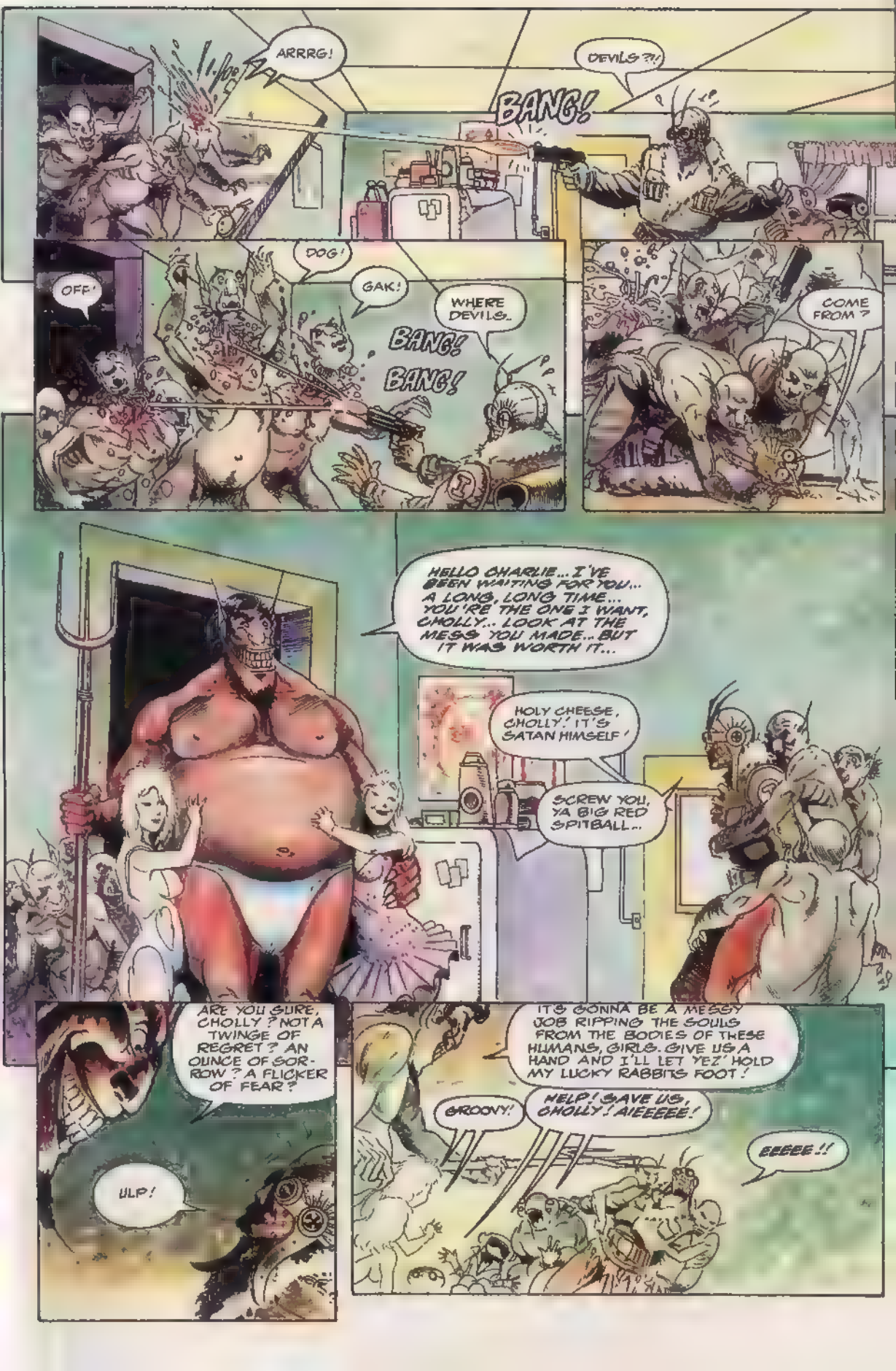

WE CONVINCED THE GIRLS TO TAKE US TO THE PYRAMID OR TEMPLE WE HAD SEEN IN THE DISTANCE EARLIER .
THE PYRAMIDS... WE LIVE THERE. IN THE PYRAMIDS
AND THAT'S HOW WE GET THERE .
CLIMB ON ! THIS IS HOW TO GET AROUND HERE !
A SNAKE ! LOOKS LIKE A SNAKE !
SOON.
THE PYRAMIDS ARE PRETTY OLD BUT THEY'RE BEING RE-FURBISHED WE GOT A JACUZZI, TANNING BEDS AND TRACK LIGHTING.
I THINK THEY'RE PLANNING TO GO CONDO SOON .
DON'T WORRY... IT WON'T HURT US .. IT'S MILES AND MILES LONG AND RUNS ALL THROUGH THIS LAND .. IT'S QUICKER THIS WAY, BUT YOU DON'T WANNA GET IN FRONT OF IT WHEN HE'S HUNGRY.
SORTA LIKE RIDING THE SUBWAYS !
THIS SKIN SMELLS LIKE A HOSPITAL.
HEADING NORTH BY NORTHWEST 3 DEGREES.
LET'S HOP OFF HERE THIS IS AS CLOSE AS WE'RE GONNA GET TODAY...
UNIDENTIFIED STRUCTURE. 4 SIDES. NO TOP-BUZZ !

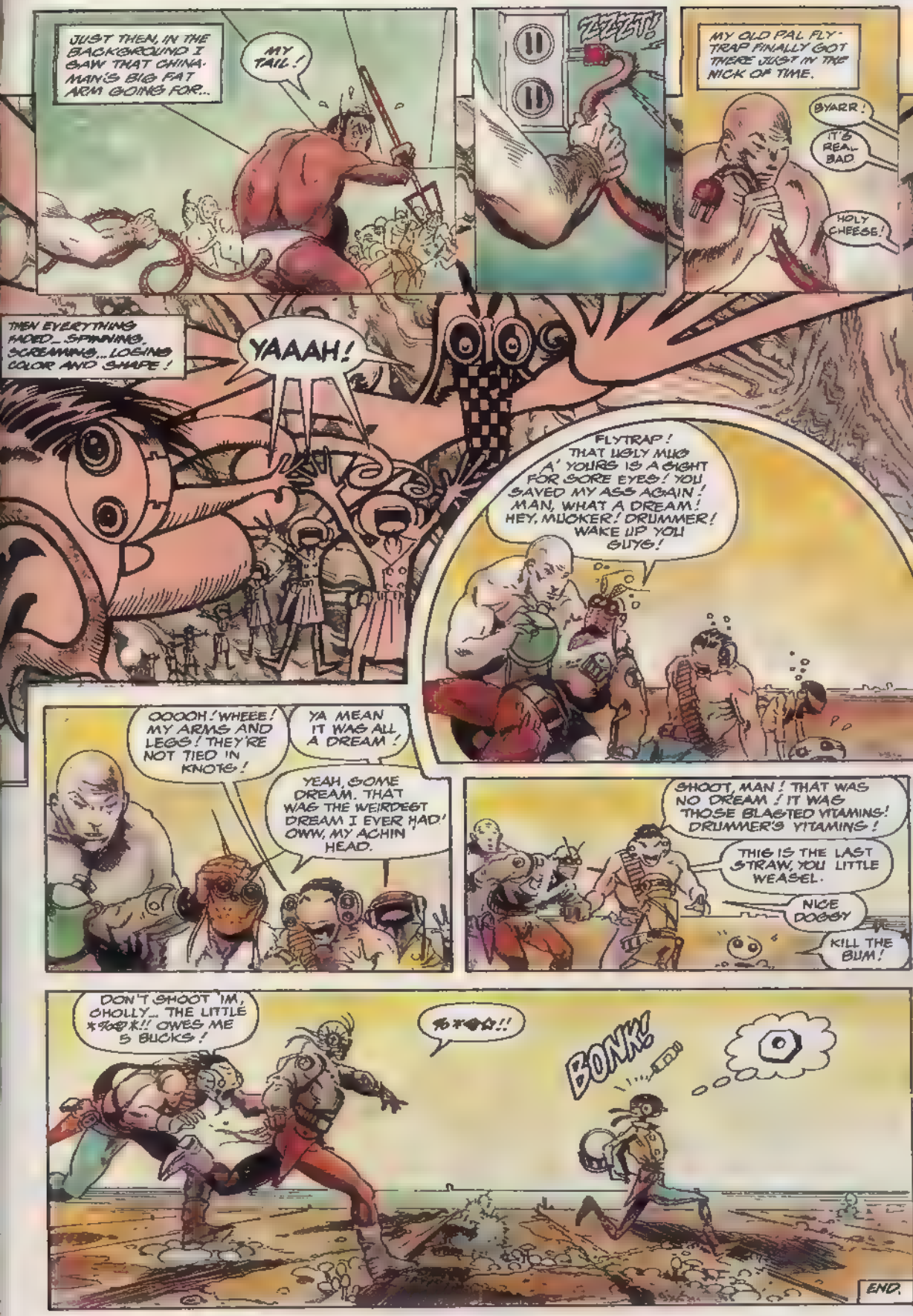

THIS WAS A WEIRD PLACE.. I COULD FEEL IT.. THERE WERE SMALLER PYRAMIDS OF DIFFERING SIZES AROUND THE BIG ONE AND THE POPULATION WAS AN UGLY SURPRISE..
SCARECROWS! LOOK'T 'EM! THE SCARECROWS LIVE HERE!
ODD ISN'T IT. A FEW GENERATIONS AGO THEY WERE ALL ARTISANS AND CRAFTSMEN.. NOW THEY'RE MOSTLY PETTY CRIMINALS. SOME FAKE SCRIPTS, JUGGLE BOOKS, READ FORTUNES AND SUCH..
...AND THEY GOT A GREAT SWIM TEAM. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A SCARECROW SWIM? THEY'RE REAL FAST...
HOPE YOU GUYS CAN STAY FOR DINNER..
WHAT'RE YA HAVIN?
LEFT-OVERS..
MMMM.. MY FAVOR-ITE..
INSIDE THE GIRL'S PYRAMID..
NOT EXACTLY THE RITZ...
CLOUDS.. LOOKS LIKE RAIN..
HOME SWEET HOME!
OH NO LOOK AT IT, GUYS!!
OUR SHADOWS ARE MIXED UP!! CHOLLY, YOU GOT DRUMMER'S SHADOW, SEE THE HAT.. MINE LOOKS LIKE I DON'T KNOW WHAT! A BUSH OR SOMETHING.. AND DRUMMER'S GOT ONE OF THE GIRLS.. HAW HAW!
OH WELL! MAYBE WE'RE STANDING WRONG..
BZZT!

I DECIDED TO CUT PRUDENCE FROM THE PACK AND TOOK HER INTO A SIDE ROOM TO TALK TO HER... BUT...
WHO'S THAT GUY?
WE'RE MARRIED. THE JUDGE MADE US GET MARRIED TO THESE SCARE-CROWS AND...
HONEY.. YOU'RE HOME! DIDN'T FORGIT TH' MILK N' EGGS DID YA?
BUT MY PASSION WAS TOO MUCH!
I GOTTA HAVE YOU NOW..
?
C'MERE, BABY! I AIN'T AFRAID O' NO SCARE-CROW!
HEY!
STICK WITH YOUR OWN KIND, DUMMY!
NO, WAIT! OFF!
NO USE WASTING BULLETS ON THIS BAG OF RAGS SO I USED BRASS KNUCKLES!
I'LL BREAK YOU UP GOOD!!
NO! THIS IS WRONG!! THIS IS NOT RIGHT!! THIS CANNOT BE!
FUD! FUD! FUD! FUD!
YOU DON'T EVER LAY A HAND ON ME AGAIN!! YOU WALKING MESS A' RAGS!


YOU KILLED HIM ! YOU KILLED HIM...
NOW YOU GOTTA BE MY HUSBAND AND TAKE CARE OF ME..
SURE BABY, CUMERE, I'LL BUY YOU A MINK COAT..
WHEN WE WERE DONE, THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND. MY FRIENDS HAD GONE SOMEWHERE.
HEY, WHERE'D EVERYBODY GO ?
FLYTRAP SHOULD HAVE FOUND ME BY NOW ! WAIT A MINUTE... WHAT AM I TALKING ABOUT... HE'LL NEVER FIND ME IN THIS PLACE !
I THREW THAT BROKEN SCARECROW MAN OUT IN FRONT OF HER CRIB LIKE A PILE OF OLD GARBAGE..
THE OTHER SCARECROWS WALKED BY AND LOOKED AT IT FROM TIME TO TIME THEY LOOKED PERPLEXED, DISTURBED BUT THEY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO US...
YOU'RE MY LOVER MAN... I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR FRIENDS ARE, BUT IF THEY WENT TO THE BIG PYRAMID, THEY'RE IN DEEP SHIT FOR SURE...
SCREW 'EM THEY'RE BIG BOYS AND THEY CAN HANDLE THEMSELVES .. LEMME HAVE SOME MORE OF THAT PIE..
BUT THEY NEVER DID COME BACK..
... AND IT WAS GETTING DARK...


EVERY NOW AND THEN, MUFFLED IN THE DISTANCE, STRANGE SOUNDS LIKE ELECTRIC SPARKS, BREAKING GLASS AND EERIE HOWLS...
AN AMPITHEATRE AND GREAT HALLWAYS LEADING OFF IN EVERY DIRECTION..AND ABOVE, PALISADES, WALKWAYS AND ROOMS..A LABYRINTH.. SMELLS OF BLUE HAZE.
LAUGHTER.. FEMALE LAUGHTER..
CHOLLY, FER THE LOVE A MIKE..IN HERE!!
MUCKER!
WHAT HAPPENED?
CHOLLY! THOSE GIRLS GOT US DRUNK AND TRICKED US!
THEY GOT US DRUNK AND TURNED US OVER TO THE DEVILS.. THEY GOT OUR GUNS..LOOK WHAT THEY DID TO US!!!
ARMS AND LEGS TIED IN KNOTS LIKE RUBBER BANDS. CAN'T GET UP!
CHOLLY! BEHIND YOU! THE DEVILS!


ARRRG!
DEVILS?!
BANG!
OFF!
DOG!
GAK!
WHERE DEVILS..
BANG!
BANG!
COME FROM?
HELLO CHARLIE... I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU... A LONG, LONG TIME... YOU'RE THE ONE I WANT, CHOLLY... LOOK AT THE MESS YOU MADE... BUT IT WAS WORTH IT...
HOLY CHEESE, CHOLLY! IT'S SATAN HIMSELF!
SCREW YOU, YA BIG RED SPITBALL..
ARE YOU SURE, CHOLLY? NOT A TWINGE OF REGRET? AN OUNCE OF SORROW? A FLICKER OF FEAR?
ULP!
IT'S GONNA BE A MESSY JOB RIPPING THE SOULS FROM THE BODIES OF THESE HUMANS, GIRLS. GIVE US A HAND AND I'LL LET YEZ' HOLD MY LUCKY RABBITS FOOT!
GROOVY!
HELP! SAVE US, CHOLLY! AIEEEEEE!
EEEEE!!


JUST THEN, IN THE BACKGROUND I SAW THAT CHINA-MAN'S BIG FAT ARM GOING FOR..
MY TAIL!
ZZZT!
MY OLD PAL FLY-TRAP FINALLY GOT THERE JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME.
BYARR!
IT'S REAL BAD
HOLY CHEESE!
THEN EVERYTHING FADED... SPINNING, SCREAMING... LOSING COLOR AND SHAPE!
YAAAH!
FLYTRAP! THAT UGLY MUG A' YOURS IS A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES! YOU SAVED MY ASS AGAIN! MAN, WHAT A DREAM! HEY, MUCKER! DRUMMER! WAKE UP YOU GUYS!
OOOOH! WHEEE! MY ARMS AND LEGS! THEY'RE NOT TIED IN KNOTS!
YA MEAN IT WAS ALL A DREAM!
YEAH, SOME DREAM. THAT WAS THE WEIRDEST DREAM I EVER HAD! OWW, MY ACHIN HEAD.
SHOOT, MAN! THAT WAS NO DREAM! IT WAS THOSE BLASTED VITAMINS! DRUMMER'S VITAMINS!
THIS IS THE LAST STRAW, YOU LITTLE WEASEL.
NICE DOGGY
KILL THE BUM!
DON'T SHOOT 'IM, CHOLLY... THE LITTLE *%@#!! OWES ME 5 BUCKS!
%*@&!!
BONK
END.

WILD CARDS

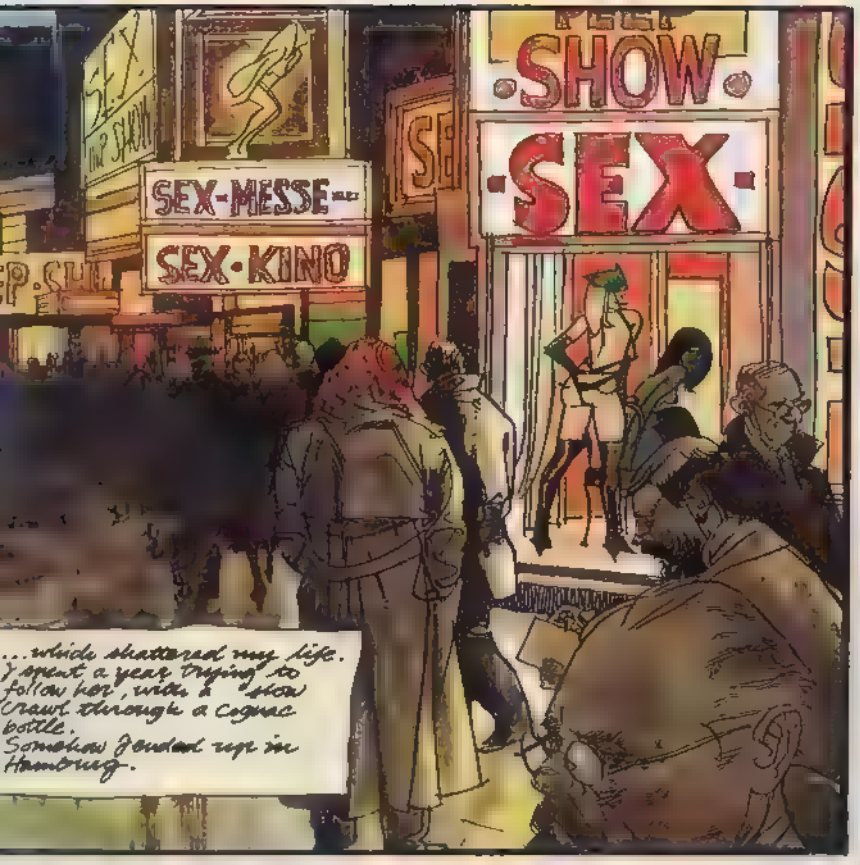
THE ALIEN WILD CARD VIRUS HAS LEFT A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF NEW YORK'S INHABITANTS AS SUPER-POWERED ACES OR DEFORMED JOKERS. DR TACHYON, ONE OF THE RACE THAT CREATED THE VIRUS, ATTEMPTS ATONEMENT FROM HIS JOKERTOWN CLINIC.

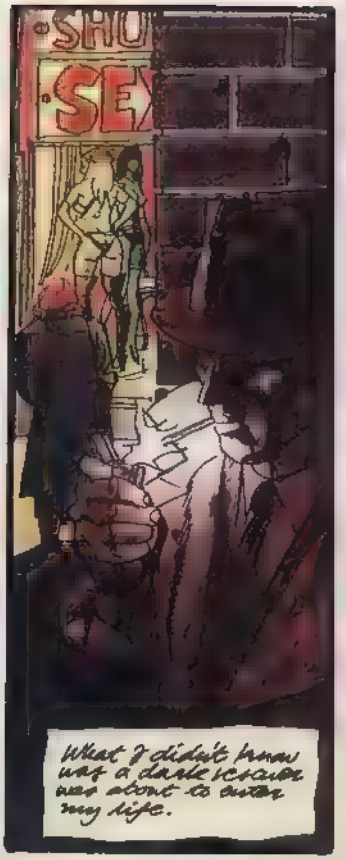
CHAPTER FOUR
BORDERLINES

WRITTEN BY
LEWIS SHINER
AND MELINDA M SNODGRASS

ARTWORK BY
JOHN M BURNS

Dr Tadeyair Secret Journal
October 31, 1988
Halloween. A night of masks and secrets.
Tonight I can see where this obsession with the past has been leading.
Hartmann and Black Shadow, Denise and Yeoman -- they are but distractions from my real concern.
It is myself, of course, that I fear for.
The masks I have worn, the secrets I have kept.
The betrayals I have been party to.
They say there is only one great love in anyone's life. Mine was Blythe Van Reinsmeier.
Brain Trust, they called her when she was part of the Four Aces.
When the government wanted a list of known aces, they went after her.
I tried to keep her from talking, and it shattered her mind.
She died in an asylum in 1955...


SHOW
SEX
SEX-MESSE
SEX-KINO
...while shattered my life. I spent a year trying to follow her, with a slow crawl through a cognac bottle. Somehow I ended up in Hamburg.

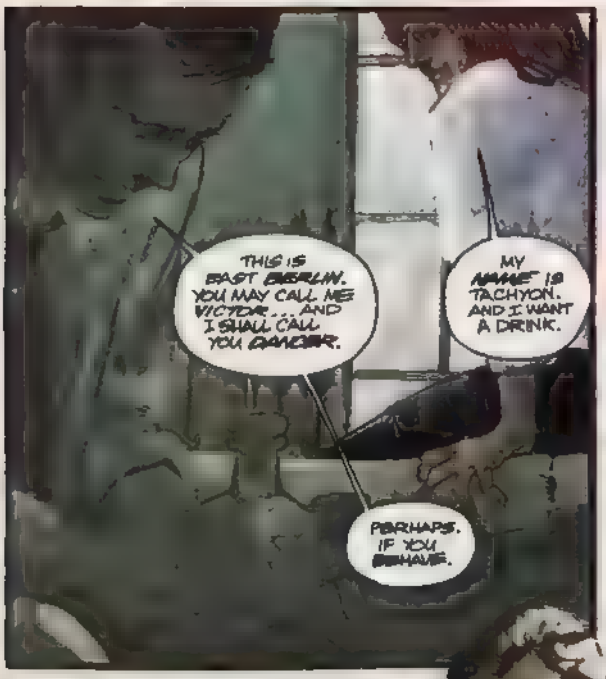

What I didn't know was a dark scissor was about to enter my life.

TIME.
I lived mostly in the sewer. Sometimes I'd crawl up to the gutter for a vacation.

NOTHING! NOT A MARK, NOT A FRANC, NOTHING!
THROW HIM IN THE CANAL... BUT BREAK HIS LEGS FIRST. I DON'T WANT HIM SWIMMING BACK TO US.

WHY DON'T I TAKE HIM OFF YOUR HANDS INSTEAD?
MAYBE WE'LL TAKE THOSE MARKS OFF YOUR HANDS, BOLSHIE.
GOTT! AN AGE!
HE IS ALL YOURS, GHADIS HERR.
I'LL TAKE HER AS WELL.
FROM NOW ON, YOUR NAME IS BLYTHE.

THIS ISN'T HAMBURG.
I SEE REPORTS OF YOUR INTELLIGENCE WERE NOT OVERRATED.
SARCASM FROM TOTAL STRANGERS IS VERY TRYING AT THIS HOUR. ESPECIALLY WHEN I'M [redacted].


THIS IS EAST BERLIN. YOU MAY CALL ME VICTOR... AND I SHALL CALL YOU DANCER.
MY NAME IS TACHYON. AND I WANT A DRIVE.
PERHAPS. IF YOU BEHAVE.

FROM THE ACCENT I'D GUESS YOU WERE RUSSIAN. WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS WHAT YOU WANT WITH ME.
INFORMATION ABOUT THE WILD CARD. IS THERE A CURE?

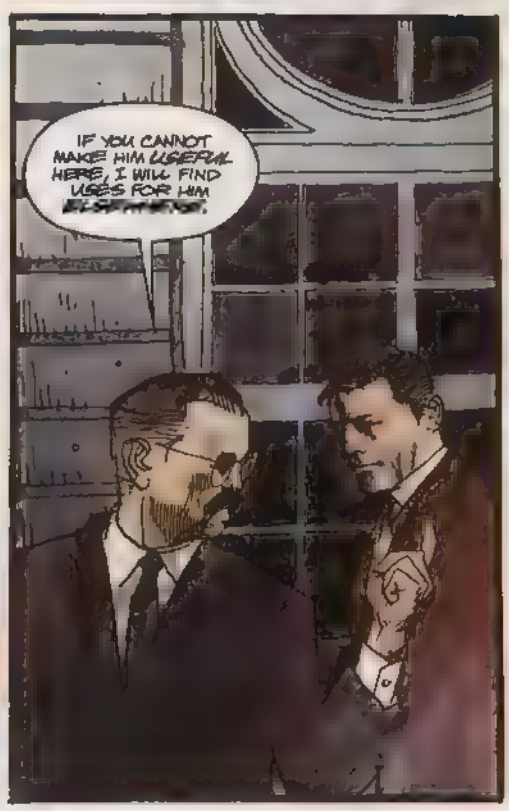
In the days that followed, my implacable tormentor must have felt he had the worst of the deal.
ONLY DEATH.

MOSCOW WANTS RESULTS.
SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE DOESN'T COUNT?

THIS KNOWLEDGE IS HARDLY GROUNDBREAKING. WHAT OF HIS PSIONIC POWERS?
I DON'T THINK THEY EXIST OTHERWISE HE WOULD HAVE USED THEM TO TRY TO ESCAPE.

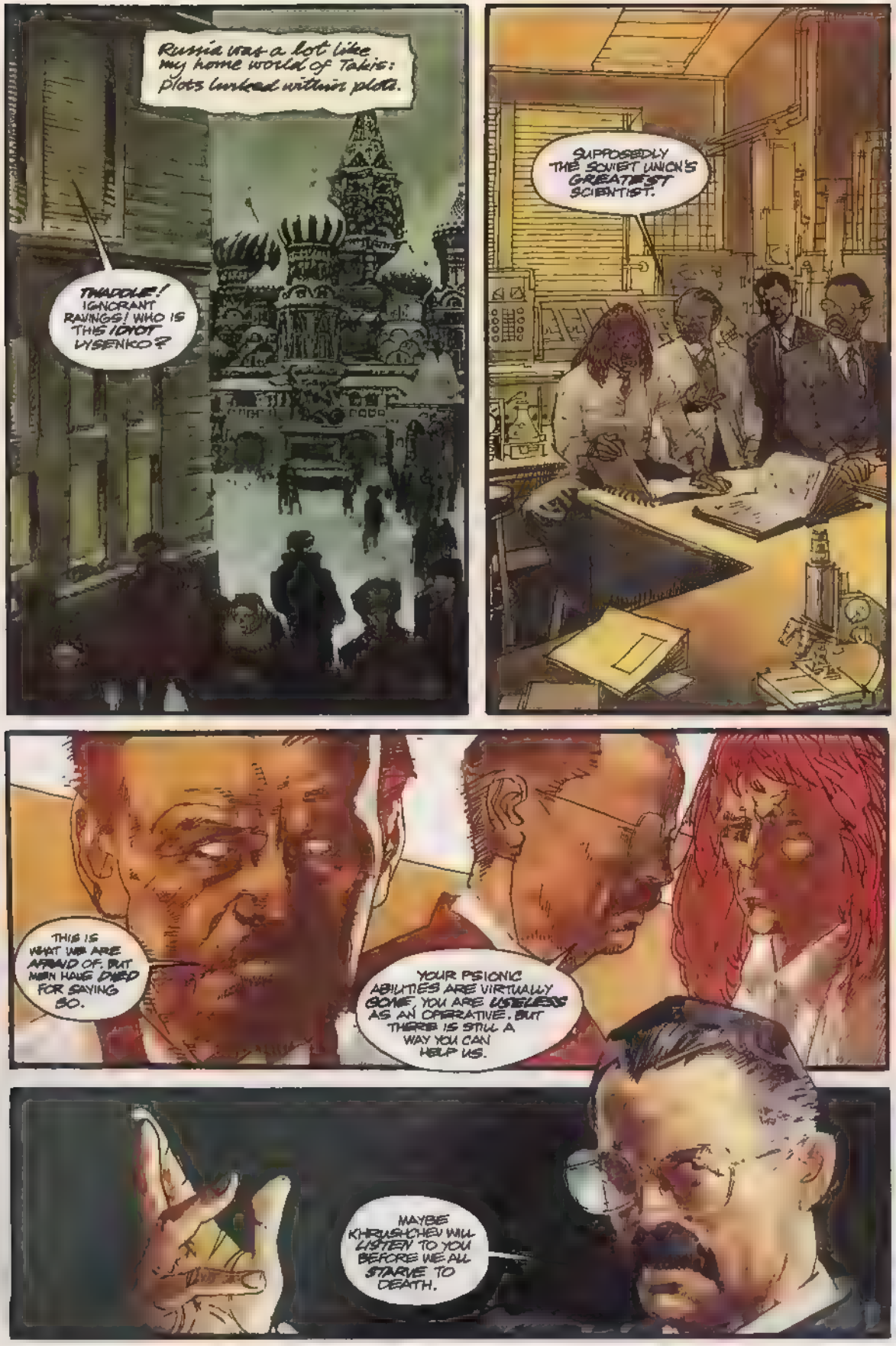
YOU HAD BETTER HOPE THESE POWERS ARE REAL, COMRADE. YOU HAD BETTER MAKE THEM REAL

HE IS ONLY A MAN, FOR GOD'S SAKE. WHY DON'T WE LET HIM GO?

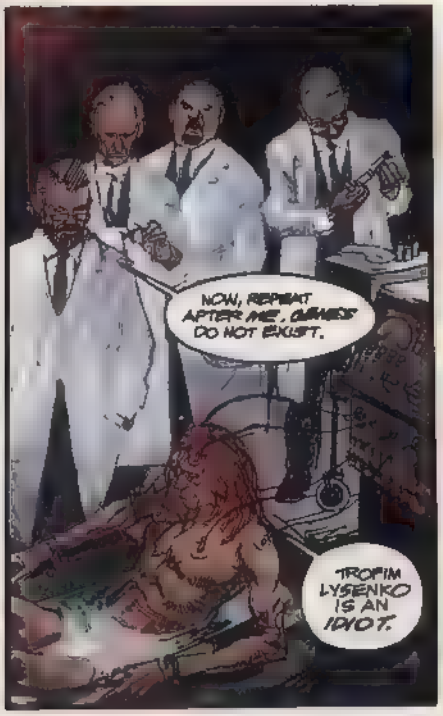

IF YOU CANNOT MAKE HIM USEFUL HERE, I WILL FIND USES FOR HIM ELSEWHERE.

BORED/GOOD MONEY/NEED TO PEE/ BORED/NO SEX/ BORING
WHAT'S SHE THINKING?
NOT VERY FLATTERING TO YOU.
HER OPINION MATTERS NOT AT ALL.
ALSO RATHER GARBLED.
DESCRIBES MY LIFE.
NOW YOU'RE THINKING...
"CHEAP PARLOR TRICKS"

TAKE CONTROL OF HER MIND.
I CAN'T!
THEY WON'T ACCEPT "CAN'T." THEY WANT RESULTS! NOW CONTROL HER AND GET IT OVER WITH! FOR YOUR SAKE AS WELL AS MINE!
NO!
I KILLED HER! I TOOK BLYTHE'S MIND AND DESTROYED HER! I WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE AND YOU WOULDN'T LET ME. LET ME NOW!
THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE SUBJECT, COMRADE POLYAKOV.
It was the first time I ever heard "Victor's" real name, though I was too stunned to register it.


Russia was a lot like my home world of Takis: plots linked within plots.
THADDLE! IGNORANT RAVINGS! WHO IS THIS IDIOT LYSENKO?
SUPPOSEDLY THE SOVIET UNION'S GREATEST SCIENTIST.
THIS IS WHAT WE ARE AFRAID OF. BUT MEN HAVE DIED FOR SAYING SO.
YOUR PSIONIC ABILITIES ARE VIRTUALLY GONE. YOU ARE USELESS AS AN OPERATIVE. BUT THERE IS STILL A WAY YOU CAN HELP US.
MAYBE KHRUSHCHEV WILL LYSTEN TO YOU BEFORE WE ALL STARVE TO DEATH.

Suddenly, I had become a weapon in a long, entrenched battle between government factions.
And Trofim Lysenko still had teeth left.


NOW, REPEAT AFTER ME. GENES DO NOT EXIST.
TROFIM LYSENKO IS AN IDIOT.

DIRECTED CHANGES... IN... HEREDITY... ARE... ACCURATE SCIENTIFIC... PHENOMENA... WEEDS IN THE... PROPER ENVIRONMENT... W.W. PRODUCES ...WHEAT...

THIS WARD IS OFF LIMITS! IDENTIFY YOURSELF!

THESE PAPERS WILL GET YOU ACROSS THE BORDER. FINLAND IS AT THE END OF THIS ROAD.
TWICE NOW YOU HAVE GIVEN ME BACK MY LIFE. WHY?
IT WAS A MISTAKE FOR ME TO HAVE BROUGHT YOU OVER FROM THE WEST. WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, YOU DO YOUR BEST TO ATONE FOR IT, AND MOVE ON.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A LESSON TO ME?
DA SVEDANYA, COMRADE DANCER. I THINK SOMEDAY WE WILL MEET AGAIN.

In fact we did meet again. In Europe, during the ill-fated Aces World Tour. And again two months ago, in Atlanta.

There Victor--whose real name is Volyakov--again saved me. Though the experience was not without losses.

I have spent the last months obsessed with the past, with bouts of self pity. It is time I learned from Volyakov's -- from Victor's -- example.

This journal has served its purpose. Time now to put it aside, and turn from the past to the present -- and the future.

DAVE ELLIOTT
EDITOR

STEVE WHITE
ASSISTANT EDITOR

MARK COX
DESIGNER

MARIE JAVINS
MANAGING EDITOR

CARL POTTS
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

BOOK

DINOSAURS: A CELEBRATION

A NUMBER OF PUBLIC MISCONCEPTIONS CONTINUE TO HAUNT THE DINOSAURS. MANY PEOPLE STILL SEE THESE MAJESTIC BEASTS AS STUPID, TORPID BRUTES THAT SPENT THEIR TIME WADING THROUGH MURKY SWAMPS AS THEY PLODDED INEVITABLY TOWARDS EXTINCTION, BUT NOT BEFORE MAKING A HAM-FISTED ATTEMPT AT MAKING A LIGHT SNACK OF A SCANTILY-CLAD CAVE WOMAN.

NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH!

"SUCCESSION"

STORY
STEVE WHITE
DAN ABNETT

ART
JOHN McCREA

COVER
COLIN MACNEIL

ISBN #0-87135-848-4